

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

Date: 12/02/2021

- Higher Education Institution: NEAPOLIS UNIVERSITY
- Town: PAFOS
- School/Faculty: SCHOOL OF LAW
- Department: LAW DEPARTMENT
- Programme(s) of study under evaluation
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1

In Greek:

In English:

Programme Name

Programme 2

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

Programme 3

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

- Department's Status: New

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

During our visit we spoke to the management of the university and department in an open atmosphere. We discussed strategic choices, plans and the overall structure of the organization. The lines of communication appear to be short. The Department of Law is still a young department, established less than a decade ago, it aims at excellence in teaching, research and outreach/ impact. Its mission is to provide high quality legal education to students and the legal community of Cyprus, to Greece and the broader region. It also wishes to be an outstanding contributor to Cypriot society and to be excellent in Academic research in the field of Law. The mission is translated into a clear strategy that members of the academic community are aware of. The high-quality staff reflect the ambitions and profile. Data collection and analysis is done at the central level, which makes it more difficult for the committee to assess the effectiveness.

Additionally, provide information on the following:

1. Coherence and compatibility among programmes of study offered by the Department.

2. Coherence and compatibility among Departments within the School/Faculty (to which the Department under evaluation belongs).

The university has a transparent overall strategy, coherence was demonstrated.

There is coherence and compatibility between the LLB and the LLM.

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

- 1.1 Mission and strategic planning**
- 1.2 Connecting with society**
- 1.3 Development processes**

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The committee was impressed by the ability of the Department to attract high quality staff who are also active outside Academia. They also have a clear research policy with concrete incentives. When academic staff apply for research funding or a sabbatical, this is in practice always granted, which supports their professional development. The committee had the impression diversity and inclusion in terms of gender deserve more attention, also with respect to senior academic positions and management positions.

Additionally, write: - Expected number of Cypriot and international students - Countries of origin of international students and number from each country

Undergraduate students: 228 (LLB GR), 75 (LLB CY) - The Department notes signs of saturation of the CY market and does very well in attracting students from Greece

Post-graduate students 19 (DLLM) 12 (MA)\ There are plans to attract more 3rd country students with an English-taught LLB program

Findings

We met the internal Quality Assurance committee who explained the cycle and asked several questions about their experiences in practice. The Department seems to be an outstanding contributor to the Cypriot Academic landscape as well as to society. The economic empowerment of the Department through its addition of an English-taught LLB in the future and further strengthening of research activities would enable solidification, growth and competitiveness. The management is well-aware that this would require extra staff.

Strengths

The university and the department have a plausible Strategic plan for growth. There are plans for a Common Law degree in English which could attract more students from other countries as part of the University strategy. We observed a culture of quality and quality control. The department can attract high quality staff and offer them a stimulating work environment.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

In the years to come the focus of the research may be strengthened, although the teaching load is significant. In terms of external communication, further steps could be made. The committee recommends formulating a transparent policy with respect to diversity & inclusion which may also cover diversity more in general and equal opportunities.

Response:

Done. We proceeded in the hiring of a new faculty member currently being full Law Professor of Reading University (Prof. Tryfonidou Alina <https://www.reading.ac.uk/law/about/staff/a-tryfonidou.aspx>) in order (due to her expertise) to formulate a transparent policy with respect to diversity & inclusion, cover diversity in general and equal opportunities and in parallel strengthening the overall actual capacity of Department (see Annex 1, new staff member CV)

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

2.1 System and quality assurance strategy

2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

There is a clear and effective quality assurance policy in place, laid down in a handbook. The internal department's Quality Assurance Committee consist of the Head of department, members of academic staff and a student. There is a regular monitoring cycle which is recognized in practice. Student evaluations, staff evaluation, complaints are considered. The committee feels that the quality assurance with respect to management and supports services are also part of that, but this might deserve more attention (or this might also be more a central-level issue which is more difficult for the committee to assess)

The Department uses a variety of pedagogical methods including case work, moot courts, court visits and a legal clinic. Students would prefer even more variety in some of their regular courses. The committee got the impression that the department is actively working on this. The policy on authorship and intellectual property is available (page 95 of the application), in some respects it struck the committee as going very far (preventing every potential harm done by others). We would welcome more attention for the freedom of research.

Findings

The meetings we had, and the documents provided demonstrated that effective quality assurance processes and mechanisms exist in the Department and they appear to be lived by. There is regular evaluation of existing courses, the performance and career advancement and performance of teaching and research staff, a policy on plagiarism, course assessment, quality standards for LL.B. and LL.M., a strategic plan review, clearly communicated student admission criteria, student performance and complaint procedures. We had a very positive impression of the building, the classrooms and the library facilities. Classrooms are equipped with the correct technological infrastructure. There is a clear policy on disability and the student welfare provision seems to be adequate. The transition during the covid19 crisis has been made well.

Strengths

All students have an academic advisor and this is highly appreciated by students, as we heard during the meeting with students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The committee suggest taking a further look at the Ethical policies and emphasize the freedom of research. The committee suggest elaborating on the variety of teaching methods also in regular courses.

Response:

Done. From the academic year 2020-2021 the enhanced learning process includes a virtual trial (criminal law and criminal procedure), simulation exercise (international law), specialized seminars and legal workshops to support the students (commercial law, civil law, public law) as well as wider public scientific discussions, <https://www.nup.ac.cy/news/neapolis-university-law-school-establishment-of-the-laboratory-for-criminal-law-and-criminal-procedural-law/>

More specific in the teaching framework of Law Department Study Programmes a simulation of Justice delivery system both at national and international level has been incorporated with the participation of students, tutors and judicial officers. The current moot Court is referred to International Court of Hague, to

European Court of Human Rights, to European Court of Justice and the International Court of the Law of the Sea.

Furthermore, a legal Clinic has been established on topics “Human Rights on Occupied Cyprus ” and the Centre of International Law “Georgios Tenecides” aiming to promote the study and research of Republic of Cyprus and Greece place as well in the international legal order implementations.

Also, the Law School of Neapolis University proceeded in the collaboration with the following distinguished legal scholars, University tutors, supreme Judicial and international experts (in alphabetical order):

- Panos Grigoriou, Professor in International and European Institutions, University of Aegean
- Giorgos Kremlis, Honourary Director in the European Commission, former Legal advisor in the European Commission’s Legal Service
- Nikolaos Markoulakis, Honourary Vice President of the Council of State
- Giannis Metaxas, Vice President of the Académie Européenne Interdisciplinaire des Sciences, Honourary University Professor
- Giannis Panousis, Emeritus Professor of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, former Rector
- Grigoris Tsaltas, Emeritus Professor of Panteion University, former Rector
- Katerina Fountedaki, Professor in Civil Law, Law School of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- Kostas Chrysogonos, Professor in Constitutional Law, Law School of AUTH, former Member of European Parliament <https://www.nup.ac.cy/news/neapolis-university-law-school-establishment-of-the-laboratory-for-criminal-law-and-criminal-procedural-law/>

Finally, for the next three years, Neapolis University Pafos has the honor to be the host of a prestigious Jean Monnet Chair, which has been awarded by the European Commission to Dr. George Pavlidis to further promoting his teaching and research into innovative methods for “Targeting Criminal Assets in the European Union” <https://www.nup.ac.cy/jean-monnet-chair/>

3. Administration

The administrative structure of the Department is well articulated and efficient. Fair and transparent procedures are in place.

Findings

The administrative structure of the Department is well-articulated and efficient. Fair and transparent procedures are in place.

Strengths.

There are established procedures, transparency, mechanisms for the prevention of misconduct, plagiarism, staff and student complaints and minutes of Department meetings are kept. The only secretary of the Department is highly committed, professional and willing to serve the needs of the Department.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Although it is difficult to judge from the outside as many of the administrative and student support work is done at the central level, the panel had the impression that the Department ought to have more administrative support.

Response:

Done, an internal employee transfer has been realized to Law Department secretariat (see |Annex 10_Employee Internal transfer form)

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Although the programmes of study of the department integrate effectively theory and practice and there are significant initiatives already in place, especially in the field of criminal law, further collaborations with professional bodies in Cyprus and Greece (which can nowadays be realised also online) would deepen the integration of theory and practice.

Although teaching in the Department is organised in a very good way, the department should explore further options for student-centred learning and employ novel teaching methods, as also highlighted during the meeting with the students.

Findings.

Excellence in teaching is Axis 1 in the department's mission statement, according to which "The mission of the School is to become an excellence centre for legal studies, supported by internationally renowned academics and jurists and focusing on innovative and human-centred teaching and research in legal sciences. The School aspires to train its students in legal science in order to enable them to compose ideas, formulate legal reasoning and cultivate their legal thinking and argumentation. At the same time, students are taught to work with dynamism, team spirit and adaptability for their future work environment. The aim is to establish the School as a centre of methodical and modern legal education, which will award diplomas that will certify formal and substantive knowledge, allowing graduate to practice a variety of legal professions (e.g. lawyers, judges or notaries, legal advisers, in-house legal advisers, etc.) in Greece and Cyprus or other European countries." In line with this mission, programmes of study in the Department are organised in accordance with the existing legislation and are complying with the professional qualification requirements both in Cyprus and in Greece. The teaching staff is delivering high quality teaching, they support the student through the advisors program and are accessible to them. In overall, learning and teaching are very well organised in the Department.

Strengths

The Department has endorsed the appointment of Academic Personal Advisors in undergraduate and postgraduate study programs at NUP, who to meet at least once a semester with their students to discuss course options. The teaching staff is organising Moot Courts, UN Model simulation, Legal Clinics and Legal writing and research seminars. Especially in the field of criminal law and international/European law the activities are rich and rewarding for the students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations.

Students can choose the placement programme as an elective in their curriculum. However, the Department is now trying to establish this initiative. Besides issues relating to confidentiality, the employment status of the students etc, the Department should pay special attention to the calculation of the ECTS points and the assessment method for this initiative.

Enhancement of the collaborations with professional bodies in Cyprus and Greece would deepen the integration of theory and practice. Especially with regard to organisations based in Greece, the Department could take advantage of online collaboration tools.

Although, student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in simulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process, as the Department is currently still developing their activities in this context, they should explore further options for student centred learning and employ novel teaching methods.

Response:

Done. In the teaching framework of Law Department study Programmes a simulation of Justice delivery system both at national and international level has been incorporated with the participation of students, tutors and judicial officers. The current moot Court is referred to International Court of Hague, to European Court of Human Rights, to European Court of Justice and the International Court of the Law of the Sea.

The new enhanced learning process from the academic year 2020-2021 includes a virtual penal trial before national court and simulation exercises before international Institutions (UN & Council of Europe),

Furthermore, a legal Clinic has been established on topics "Human Rights on Occupied Cyprus " and the Centre of International Law "Georgios Tenecides" aiming to promote the study and research of Republic of Cyprus and Greece place as well in the international legal order implementations.

The University also, during the last months, proceeded in the signing of a MOU with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Commissioner of Presidency of Cyprus Republic as well, (see Annexes 4,5)

Aiming to implement a new, enhanced learning process, which from the academic year 2020-2021 includes a virtual trial (criminal law and criminal procedure), simulation exercise (international law), specialized seminars and legal workshops to support the students (commercial law, civil law, public law)

So, in order to achieve all these, the School of Law has integrated a series of formative activities, in particular moot court exercises, in the courses curricula and syllabi.

More specifically, the Moot Court in International and EU law exercise has been integrated in the courses Public International Law (NOM129), Law of the European Union (NOM227), International Criminal Law (NOM378), International Economic Law (NOM380) and Aviation Law (NOM372). The Moot Court in Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure has been integrated in the course Synthesis of Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure (NOM 468), which combines knowledge of both substantive criminal law and criminal procedure. Finally, the Legal Clinic has been integrated in the course of International Protection of Human Rights (NOM127).

Other similar training and educational activities, such as visits to courthouses, have been integrated in the courses NOM 121, 221, 117, 329, 364 & 468. Syllabi are available in the revised text of the application (see Annex6 _ LLB LAW NUP Application ENG.doc).

Also, the Law School of Neapolis University proceeded in the collaboration with the following distinguished legal scholars, University tutors, supreme Judicial and international experts (in alphabetical order):

- Panos Grigoriou, Professor in International and European Institutions, University of Aegean

- Giorgos Kremlis, Honorary Director in the European Commission, former Legal advisor in the European Commission's Legal Service
- Nikolaos Markoulakis, Honorary Vice President of the Council of State
- Giannis Metaxas, Vice President of the Académie Européenne Interdisciplinaire des Sciences, Honorary University Professor
- Giannis Panousis, Emeritus Professor of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, former Rector
- Grigoris Tsaltas, Emeritus Professor of Panteion University, former Rector
- Katerina Fountedaki, Professor in Civil Law, Law School of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- Kostas Chrysogonos, Professor in Constitutional Law, Law School of AUTH, former Member of European Parliament

Teaching Staff

The Committee was thoroughly impressed with the qualifications of the Department's teaching staff and wishes to commend the University on its ability to recruit both accomplished scholars and promising younger colleagues. The Department has a functioning process for obtaining student feedback and using it to evaluate and improve teaching work, but we believe that the Department can be more effective in ensuring staff engagement with the process (see recommendation below).

Also, write the following:

- Number of teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work: 9
- Number of special teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work: Four (4) in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, two (2) in 2020-2021
- Number of visiting Professors: Six (6) in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, four (4) in 2020- 2021

Findings

According to the application materials, in the 2020/1 academic session, teaching staff consists of nine (9) permanent members, two (2) special teaching members and four (4) visiting professors (see above for a comparison with previous sessions). We had the opportunity to meet all colleagues and were most favourably impressed with commitment to the Department and their engagement with the Committee. We asked questions about their experience of teaching at Neapolis University, their approach to teaching, and the challenges they face.

Strengths

Although still a very young institution, the Department has been able to hire a strong group of scholars at all levels of seniority. The Head of Department is a leading scholar with broad and extensive experience. All staff are very qualified, and their specialisms and expertise support the Department 's programmes of study effectively. The Visiting Professors complement the expertise of permanent staff very well, and their employment appears to preserve the 70/30 ratio. Special teaching staff are qualified in their areas, and their teaching hours as stated in the application (p. 132) suggest that they are relied on in an appropriate fashion. The ratio of subjects per member of permanent teaching staff is appropriate, and so is the overall staff/student ratio.

Areas of improvement and recommendations.

We were provided with several examples of student feedback, Supervisor reports, and Teacher self-assessment reports. These showed that the Department has a functioning process on feedback. However, the self-assessment and the supervisors' forms contained only numerical scores and no qualitative feedback, which limits their usefulness for the assessed member of staff. We would recommend that the forms be revised to include reference to strengths, weaknesses and concrete action points (if needed).

Response:

Done. The relative templates have been revised and uploaded in order to include reference to strengths, weaknesses and concrete action points, (see Annex 2, revised template staff performance evaluation.)

5. Research

Overall, the Committee was favorably impressed by the Department's research profile. Excellence in research is axis 2 of the Department's Strategic Mission.

Generally, that mission is adequately supported by the existing procedures and facilities. Research and teaching are well-integrated. At the same time, the Committee believes that the University could do more to facilitate colleagues' participation in international conferences, and to integrate existing Cypriot legal databases into its programme for improving students' research skills (see recommendations below).

Findings.

The Department's application was very thorough, and the Department was very responsive to our request to receive the most up-to-date versions of the faculty's publication records. We reviewed those records, the Department's research plan, and the research-related components of the LLB programme. During our visit, we had the opportunity to discuss some issues and put questions to the Rector, the Head of the Department, and members of the faculty. Our discussion focused on balancing teaching workload with internationally excellent research, the challenges of publishing in Cypriot/Greek journals that have limited international visibility, and support for research by means of sabbatical leave and funding for conference attendance.

Strengths.

The Department has a clear policy on supporting research, and its processes appear to be applied fairly and consistently. Members of the Department have a consistent record of publication in both international and Cypriot/Greek outlets. Research and teaching are well integrated in that colleagues' teaching overlaps very tightly with their research expertise. The Rector assured us that applications for research funding and sabbatical leave are favorably treated, though the small number of faculty imposes some obvious limits in that regard.

Areas of improvement and recommendations.

We identified two main areas of improvement:

Given the high teaching load per member of academic staff, the Committee believes that the University can and should do more to support the development of colleagues' research through support for conference funding. At present, support is provided only for conferences in which a member of staff is presenting. We believe that such support should be extended to cover mere attendance at important international conferences, particularly for junior academic staff. This is not likely to involve huge costs, especially as more international conferences are bound to move online.

Response:

Done.

1. We proceeded in the hiring of a new faculty member currently being full Law Professor of Reading University (Prof. Tryfonidou Alina <https://www.reading.ac.uk/law/about/staff/a-tryfonidou.aspx>) in order to strengthen the overall actual capacity of Department and to reduce the high teaching load of Department faculty (see Annex 1, new staff member CV)

2. The research policy has been revised accordingly in order to include and cover mere attendance of academic staff at important international conferences, (see Annex 3, Revised Research Policy, Neapolis University Research Office (NRO), chapter 5)

It was not clear to us that the Department's plan for enhancing students' research skills integrates the two main Cypriot legal databases CYLAW and Leginet. Their prominence and use in the legal profession make them obvious focal points for students' research skills training.

Response:

Done. We proceeded to the registration in Leginet data base, (see Annex 8_ Invoice 56). So, currently the available Law databases with subscription are as below:

1. **Westlaw**
2. **LexisNexis**
3. **Leginet**
4. **Sakoulas-online.gr**

Additionally, a large number of free access Law portals and databases is available for use from Neapolis academic Law community (see Annex9_ free access law databases)

6. Resources

The Committee was satisfied with the availability and use of resources for the Department. We noted that, as is normal in a small and young institutions, most resource decisions are taken at University rather than at Department level, and that most areas of student support are centralised. Overall, the allocation of resources appeared to us reasonable and sustainable.

Findings.

We had the opportunity to discuss resource questions with the Rector both at the beginning and the end of our visit. We also met with the Department's administrator and colleagues from the University's central services. We discussed the feasibility of relying on a single Department administrator and the effect this has on the administrative responsibilities of members of teaching staff. Overall, we were satisfied with the Rector's responses to our questions. We were also pleased to hear that the planned expansion of the Department's programme offering is tied to an increase in the number of permanent staff.

Strengths.

The Department is reasonably resourced, and there is a sensible division of labour between central university and departmental resources. Plans for future expansion are tied with increases of teaching staff.

Areas of improvement and recommendations.

Our main concern was that, while the system appears to be working, reliance on a single Department administrator increases the administrative load on members of teaching staff, and may therefore not prove sustainable as the Department grows.

Response:

Done. An internal employee transfer has been realized to Law Department secretariat (see Annex 10_ Employee Internal transfer form)

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The Committee believes that the Department is clearly compliant with the applicable standards of assessment and gladly recommends its accreditation. The documentation in the application pack was very thorough and informative, all our requests for further information were answered swiftly and fully, and our interaction with the teaching and administrative staff of the Department and the University during our remote visit was pleasant and constructive.

Despite its 'youth' as an Institution, and the challenges of a saturated market, the Department has managed to recruit a strong and research-active body of scholars, and offers a suitable range of study programmes. It has a clear strategic plan and has so far been effective in delivering on it. Internal quality assurance mechanisms are robust, the learning & teaching experience is well structured and adequately supported, and there is a very clear synergy between faculty's research expertise and their teaching areas. We welcome the University's plans to expand the Department's course profile, as long as this comes with additional investment in teaching and academic personnel. We would recommend a reconsideration of the teaching workload of the academic staff in combination with the high administrative burden they are bearing, in order to allow them to have more time on research, which is very important for the Department and in line with its mission statement.

The few concerns we had about the Department's processes are sporadic, not systemic, and they can all be addressed reasonably easily. In particular, the Department should consider the ECTS weighting of placements, take further steps to ensure that learning is student-centred; that delivery is more varied in mode and includes Cypriot law databases more fully in its skills provision; and that collaboration with professional bodies is better integrated into its programmes of study. Moreover, we believe that the Department should do more to ensure that its existing process for translating student feedback into teaching improvement works in practice and not just in theory. Greater emphasis on qualitative feedback (e.g. 'Strengths', 'Weaknesses', 'Action Points') in Supervisor and Self-Assessment Reports would be a step in the right direction. We also believe that the Department would benefit greatly in its research culture by encouraging and funding colleagues' participation in international conferences (whether or not they are presenting).

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Pantelis Sklias	Rector	
Prof. Stelios Perrakis	Dean	

Date: 12/02/2021