

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: Date

# Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences
- **Department:** Department of Chemistry
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**  
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

## Programme 1

### In Greek:

Χημεία (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

### In English:

Chemistry (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor Degree)

## Programme 2

### In Greek:

Programme Name

### In English:

Programme Name

## Programme 3

### In Greek:

Programme Name

### In English:

Programme Name

- **Department's Status:** Currently Operating



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

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
  - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
  - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
  - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.3.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

## 1. Department's academic profile and orientation

### Sub-areas

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

A/A pages	Quality Indicators/Deficiencies	Comments/Proposed Actions
p. 5-9	<b>1. Department's academic profile and orientation</b>	
p. 5-6	<b>1.1 Mission and strategic planning</b>	
<b>1</b> p. 5	The mission, the strategy and the implementation are formulated in a too generic way. Develop a plan for actions.	The University of Cyprus (UCY) strategic plan, which outlines the mission, the vision and the high-level goals for the next five years, has already been revised, and it is currently under approval by the Senate. The strategic goals and the operational objectives will be disseminated to the relevant Departments within the next year to develop a plan for actions and start the implementation process.
<b>2</b> p. 5	It is recommended that the department considers forming an external advisory board composed of representatives of Cypriot chemicals industries and international chemistry academics.	One of the strategic actions of the Department involves the formation of an external advisory board which will be composed of internationally recognised chemistry academic experts and an expert from local chemical industry.
<b>3</b> p. 5	Provide information on: Coherence and compatibility among programmes of study offered by the Department (The number and scope of advanced courses offered to graduate students is limited).	There is coherence and compatibility among the undergraduate and graduate (MSc and PhD) programmes of study offered by the Department. The level of knowledge and skills acquired by students from their first degree allows them to follow the advanced graduate-level courses.  The minimal attendance set by University Regulations, for a graduate course to be viable, is 5 students. This is a major University issue that is outside the Department's control. The low numbers of incoming students limit the number of courses offered.
<b>4</b> p. 5	Provide information on: Coherence and compatibility among Departments within	Interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate programs of study are proposed and discussed among the Departments of Pure and Applied

	the School/Faculty (Explore interdisciplinary courses).	Sciences (i.e., Computational Science). A formal approval of English Programs of Study is required by the Cypriot Parliament, and it is still pending.
p. 6-7	<b>1.2 Connecting with society</b>	
5 p. 7	Graduates of the department indicated to the EEC that connection with society could be improved.	<p>Please refer to pages 35-37 in the Application form for Departmental Evaluation “Department’s Social Contribution”.</p> <p>The Department has also created a new course called “Placement of Students in Organizations/Industries/Laboratories”. The course has been formally approved by the Departmental Council, and the syllabus has been prepared. Through this course, students will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge along with soft skills (e.g., teamwork, critical thinking, communication, etc) to be obtained during their first two years of study, and they will develop essential technical and practical skill sets (technical writing, data analysis, etc) required for a job in industry.</p>
6 p. 7	The mechanisms of interaction with communication with graduates are not formalized and relies primarily on good personal relations.	The University Development and Alumni Relations Office is responsible for these types of mechanisms. The University keeps a track of all alumni and launches a new lifelong learning program, which offers open lectures and seminars to its alumni. The Department will set up the “Alumni Lectures” as a part of the Departmental Seminar Series. The Department also organizes Career Fair Events (“Chemistry & Career”), and most of the lectures are given by alumni. This is an effort to better inform the graduates about career prospects and employment opportunities.
p. 7-8	<b>1.3 Development processes</b>	
7 p. 7	Staff recruitment strategy, and defining excellence should be considered.	Staff recruitment strategy does not depend solely on the Department, but also on the University. There is a University policy about distribution of new academic positions in each Department. The Department takes into consideration recruitment strategies that involve experienced recruitment committee members and effective interview questions. These result in better quality candidates for a given advertised position. More details will be

		provided in the new Departmental Plan for Actions that will be developed next year (Please see #1).
<b>8</b> p. 7	How the position in the Inorganic section will fit in with the department's Research Themes.	The position is now filled by a candidate, whose research area combines main group chemistry and applied materials science (from synthesis to applications).
<b>9</b> p. 7-8	<p>A coherent strategy for overseas recruitment is required. The department may consider using English as the language of instruction for its new Master's courses.</p> <p>Write: - Expected number of Cypriot and international students; - Countries of origin of international students and number from each country</p> <p>Comment: - The number of graduated students BSc. has been fairly low the last couple of years. This might create sustainability issues for the MSc and PhD programs unless the recruitment for these programs are made more internationally competitive; - The EEC note that there is a mismatch in the dates of students being accepted by UoC and Greek universities, which creates problems vis-à-vis the numbers of students who actually start the year.</p>	<p>The Department has already agreed to switch the Graduate program to English, and this new program will begin in September 2021.</p> <p>When Erasmus students are enrolled in our undergraduate and/or graduate courses, English is used as the language of instruction.</p> <p>The allocation of students to the Departments is performed by the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service. The numbers are varied.</p> <p>The Department's actions for student recruitment involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-School visits (Students get the chance to view the department, receive program information and experience real-time experiments)</li> <li>-Organization of a 3-day student reception</li> <li>-Organization of Summer school</li> <li>-Brochures with alumni and student (UG, graduate, Erasmus) testimonials. These will be used on our new departmental webpage.</li> <li>-Increase the number of fellowships.</li> <li>-English Graduate Programs of Study.</li> <li>- English Undergraduate Programs of Study: The Parliament of Cyprus, in an effort to increase the internationalization of university education, will introduce the English language in the Undergraduate Programs of Study</li> </ul> <p>Mismatch in the dates: This is outside the control of the Department.</p>
p. 8-9	<b>Areas of improvement and recommendations</b>	
<b>10</b> p. 8-9	Student recruitment and the link to former graduates from the department could be addressed simultaneously by using role-models from the department in the student recruitment process. It would be relevant for the department to	See # 9.



have alternative material directly reflecting their own analysis of the competition for good students. This should focus more on career opportunities, internationalization, global societal issues like health and environment	
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## 2. Quality Assurance

### Sub-areas

- 2.1 System and quality assurance strategy**
- 2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study**

p. 10-13	<b>2. Quality Assurance</b>	
p. 10-11	<b>2.1 System and quality assurance strategy</b>	
<b>11</b> p. 11	Quality assurance is not conducted adequately, e.g., there is no peer review of teaching, mechanisms for student review are not in line with the most modern practice etc.	The mechanisms for controlling the quality of teaching are conducted and supported by the University, and particularly by the Teaching and Learning Centre (KE.DI.MA.). According to the University policy, instructors use the results of their assessments for self-improvement purposes. If necessary, solutions are pursued by the Department Chair in cooperation with the Director of KE.DI.MA. to improve the quality of teaching. KE.DI.MA. also organizes training seminars for instructors to improve their teaching skills. Nowadays, KE.DI.MA. offers online seminars for instructors, "Take your Teaching Online". The cycle of these seminars lasts eight weeks, and it helps the instructor to develop new skills and understand the ideas and tools that make online teaching and learning effective.
<b>12</b> p. 11	The means of quality assurance of the connection with society are not entirely clear.	The external advisory board, which will be comprised of recognised scientific personalities from industry and academia, will provide advice and feedback on this particular strategic action.
<b>13</b> p. 11	Many of the management and support services are supplied centrally by the university and are outside the department's control.	We agree.
p. 11-12	<b>2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study</b>	
<b>14</b> p. 12	Specific indicators are not clearly described across all areas.	Please refer to p.49 in the Application form for Departmental Evaluation "Quality indicators for Programmes of Studies". Some of these indicators include: average admission score per Department, percentage of students who accepted the position in the first allocation, percentage of students who have

		accepted the second allocation, number of students per program and per academic year, average degree per program, average grade of students per course in the curriculum, number of students deleted in relation to the total number of students in the curriculum, number of students deleted in relation to the total number in the year of admission, average-graduation-time semesters, percentage of students who graduated in a normal period per curriculum, number of students in relation to the number of Academics, international rankings (Foundation and Departments).
<b>15</b> p. 12	Building facilities & Library: The lack of a score reflects the lack of detailed data provided to the EEC, largely, but not only, due to the virtual nature of the onsite visit.	Virtual tours of the building facilities of the UCY and the Library Information Center were submitted along with the application form.
<b>16</b> p. 12	The quality indicators 2.2.2 & 2.2.4 are related to the evaluation of our UG Program of Study	UG Program of Study
p. 13	<b>Areas of improvement and recommendations</b>	
<b>17</b> p. 13	The formation of an external advisory board is recommended.	See #2

### 3. Administration

p. 14-15	<b>3. Administration</b>	
<b>18</b> p. 15	The University should consider embedding some of its central staff in departmental spaces.	This is a University matter.
p. 8-9	<b>Areas of improvement and recommendations</b>	
<b>19</b> p. 15	The central administration should have workspaces in departmental buildings, so that they integrate more fully with the department staff, both academic and professional service.	See #18

## 4. Learning and Teaching

### Sub-areas

#### 4.1 Planning the programmes of study

#### 4.2 Organisation of teaching

p. 16-18	<b>4. Learning and Teaching</b>	
p. 16-17	<b>4.1 Planning the programmes of study</b>	
<b>20</b> p. 16	Peer-review of the Programs of Study: We understand that a new program of peer-reviewing of teaching is being implemented. We recommend that the department engages with this fully as it becomes available.	See point 9 "Chemistry - Undergraduate Programme of Studies Evaluation"
<b>21</b> p. 17	The quality indicator 4.1.3 is related to the evaluation of our UG Program of Study	See point 11 "Chemistry - Undergraduate Programme of Studies Evaluation"
p. 17	<b>4.2 Organisation of teaching</b>	
<b>22</b> p. 17	No deficiencies	
p. 18	<b>Areas of improvement and recommendations</b>	
<b>23</b> p. 18	The department should consider instigating processes for formal oversight of marking.	Such processes are outside the control of the Department and are governed by University rules. Some processes though have been internally approved for quality control. For example, for oversight of marking, a second examiner will be appointed. In diploma thesis marking, if two grades deviate by more than 20%, a 3 <sup>rd</sup> independent evaluator will be appointed. For more details, please see point 2 "Chemistry - Undergraduate Programme of Studies Evaluation"



## 5. Teaching Staff

p. 19-20		5. Teaching Staff
<b>24</b> p. 19-20	Comment: The distribution of the teaching load is commendably even (15 teaching staff, 1 special teaching staff, 0 visiting professors, 0 special scientists on lease services).	Special attention should be given to the two members of the academic staff (Profs. Theocharis and Efstathiou) that will retire within the next four years. The aim of the Department is to fill these vacancies immediately. If this is not possible, the law gives the right to fill the positions with Visiting Academic Staff.
p. 20		Areas of improvement and recommendations
<b>25</b> p. 20	The future recruitment strategy should focus on maintaining the broad coverage and balancing the Physical/Organic/Inorganic/Analytical sub fields- or recruitment should be considered a tool for increasing the international competitiveness and impact disregarding the current balanced situation. Strategic prioritization should be made.	The Department plans to maintain the broad coverage and balance among the areas of Chemistry. The faculty recruitment strategy is a part of the strategic plan of the UCY, and subsequently of the Department.
<b>26</b> p. 20	It is important to re-establish a visiting professor program. The department is urged to analyze the possibilities for such initiatives including bilateral agreements.	The Chemistry has not employed visiting professors over the last few years due to the economic crisis and the financial pressure. The UCY supports the employment of visiting professors if sufficient justification is provided.
<b>27</b> p. 20	The age-profile of the department must be considered in relation to the future recruitment plans.	Strategic Plan for Faculty Recruitment: The two upcoming retirements of the Department will be in the divisions of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry. The UCY will claim the required budget to fill the expected vacancies in the year they will be released. The Department will recruit faculty members from the areas of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry, considering the importance of specific research infrastructure built by the retiring faculty members.

## 6. Research

p. 21-23	<b>6. Research</b>	
p. 20	<b>Areas of improvement and recommendations</b>	
<b>28</b> p. 22	<p>Strengthening the funding of the department should be made a strategic goal with well-defined success criteria.</p>	<p>The Department's funding strategy outlines the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Closer collaboration with the University Research Support Service, whose mission is to promote research and innovation at the UCY by attracting external funding, managing research projects, and exploitation of research results.</li> <li>-Promote interdisciplinary research collaboration with other departments, institutions and industries.</li> <li>-Attract funding in sectors related to the local economy (e.g. health, energy, environment, agriculture, food, etc.).</li> <li>-Create an effective hiring strategy to attract new research-oriented young people.</li> <li>-The academic staff is encouraged to submit a bigger number of proposals.</li> </ul>

## 7. Resources

p. 24-25	7. Resources	
<b>29</b> p. 24	Comment: The department has unlocked potential, which could be exploited in a situation with better resources.	We agree. The Department continues to attract funding to improve its infrastructure and provides financial support to attract better graduate students.
<b>30</b> p. 24	Comment: The planned expansion with a growth of 25-33% in staff is not sustainable with the current funding. The department is currently run with a minimal size of the technical staff, which should be considered in parallel with the planned expansion of the academic staff.	This expansion, which does not depend solely on the Department, is a part of the strategic plan only if the budget allows it. The UCY finances depend significantly on state government.  Technical Staff: It is important to mention that the Department has just announced the position of a Special Scientist for Project Support. The employee will be in charge of the chemical warehouse.
p. 25	Areas of improvement and recommendations	
<b>31</b> p. 25	The resources are not sufficient to sustain the ambitions for growth in the departmental strategy.	See #29 & #30
<b>32</b> p. 25	Further instrument-specific training of the technical team would be helpful.	We agree. More training courses will be offered to the technical staff.

## B. Conclusions and final remarks

p. 26-27	Conclusions & Final Remarks	
<b>33</b> p. 26	Expansion of scientific staff. The autonomy of the department is limited, hence agility in the hiring process does not exist. The recruitment pool is quite limited. The funding is challenging and new hires must be competitive in the funding race as well as fit the research and teaching strategies of the department.	See points #24 - #27.
<b>34</b> p. 26-27	Student recruitment is difficult. Focus on attracting motivated students in order to optimize the return on the teaching investments made by the department. The department should consider its graduates as potential ambassadors and exploit good role models in recruitment and promotion of the department.	See #9.
<b>35</b> p. 27	Funding is challenging and does pose a bottleneck to the ambitions of the department. The department should analyze how it is doing in the national competition for funds and try to identify any unexplored possibilities. Investing in teaching assistance to free-up time to enable strong proposals from the department can be a good deal on several levels. The department should exploit its strong scientific network of collaborators for building strong proposals for national, European and bilateral funding schemes.	See #28.
<b>36</b> p. 27	Identification of central strategic initiatives in the society: sustainability, health, energy etc., should be done centrally by the department and used for student recruitment, for identifying appearing funding opportunities and for the general promotion of the department towards society.	The Department's commitment to perform effective and successful faculty and student recruitment strategies will provide a higher number of enrolled students and more funding opportunities.

### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Constantina Kapnissi-Christodoulou	Associate Professor, Chair of the Department	
Epameinondas Leontidis	Professor, Dean of the School of Pure and Applied Sciences	
Savvas Georgiades	Assistant Professor, Coordinator of the Undergraduate Program of Study	
Sophia Charalambous-Hayes	Associate Professor, Coordinator of the Graduate Program of Study	
FullName	Position	
FullName	Position	

Date: 28/12/2020

