Doc. 300.3.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

Date: 04/02/2025

- **Higher Education Institution: University of Cyprus**
- **Town: Nicosia**
- **School/Faculty: Faculty of Letters**
- **Department: Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies**
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

Programme 1

In Greek:

Προπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα Βυζαντινών και Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών

In English:

Bachelor in Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies (4 years, 242 ECTS)

Programme 2

In Greek:

Μάστερ στη Νεοελληνική Φιλολογία

In English:

Master's in Modern Greek Studies (2 years, 120 ECTS)

Programme 3

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό στις Νεοελληνικές Σπουδές

In English:

Ph.D. in Modern Greek Studies (3-8 years, 240 ECTS)

- **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 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

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

1.1 Mission and strategic planning

The Department agrees with the EEC that there is **high compliance** with all quality indicators/criteria.

1.2 Connecting with society

The Department agrees with the EEC that there is **high compliance** with all quality indicators/criteria. Points 1.2.2 and 1.2.4 are recommendations for the University's Marketing and Alumni Offices. The Department will forward the EEC's recommendation to the above-mentioned entities, before the end of the semester.The Department will gladly work with these entities to promote the Department's important work further and track the placement of graduates.

1.3 Development processes

The Department agrees with the EEC that there is **high compliance** with quality indicators/criteria 1.3.1, 1.3.3 and 13.4. The Department further agrees with the recommendation that "the University's Marketing Office needs to be mobilised to help more actively with student recruitment."

The EEC has marked 1.3.2 as partially compliant (3) noting that "the Department is becoming increasingly understaffed and needs to be enlarged with new staff members through new hires: this is necessary to compensate for staff members who retired recently or will retire very soon. In light of impending retirements of 1/3 of the department staff, this problem needs to be alleviated before it takes on larger dimensions." The Department agrees with the EEC's recommendation. In the past few years, 5 faculty members have retired and have not been replaced. The Department will assess its academic needs and request that the University Administration grant at least one faculty position. It has also informed the Dean of the Faculty of Letters that it will emphatically demand at least one new position.

The Department would like to note that the granting of this request lies with the University Administration, and it hopes the Administration will also agree with the EEC that at least one new faculty position is urgently needed.

The Department agrees with the final judgment of the EEC that it's compliant with quality indicators/criteria 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

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

2.1 System and quality assurance strategy

The Department agrees with the EEC that there is **high compliance** with all quality indicators/criteria.

2.2. Quality assurance for the programmes of study

The Department agrees with the EEC that there is **high compliance** with all quality indicators/criteria except for the following:

2.2.12.2 (Building facilities) and 2.2.12.3 (Rooms for theoretical, practical and laboratory lessons) where the committee marked that the Department is **non-compliant** and noted the following: "The current condition of the teaching and office spaces being insufficient AND dispersed all over Nicosia is a huge drawback, and the students have taken note. Besides, the previous EEC pointed out this unacceptable infrastructural problem in its evaluation of 2020 and the situation has not improved. The university needs to take action urgently to address the problem and to liberate the teaching and the administrative staff of the department from the excessive logistical concerns that these deficiencies pose."

The Department fully agrees with the EEC and has repeatedly informed the Administration of the above problem. It has also repeatedly informed the appropriate university committees of this unacceptable infrastructural problem and its many health hazards. The Department agrees that the University needs to take urgent action to solve this problem. Once again, it will submit yet another request for its relocation before the end of the spring semester. Unfortunately, this is an issue that the Department itself cannot resolve. It is fully dependent on the Administration's willingness to resolve it. **The Department would like to note, however, that academically it is ranked very high on all criteria. It hopes that the Administration shares its frustration that such a high ranking is undermined by the lamentable state of its building facilities.**

2.2.19 The EEC notes that the Department is partially compliant (3) on this criterion, explaining that "students' funding and Scholarship opportunities on the Doctoral level have been substantially reduced in recent years." The Department agrees with EEC. This has been a university-wide policy, and though the department understands that there are economic challenges associated with supporting doctoral students, it believes that more sustainable policies to support students could be established. Unfortunately, since this is a university-wide policy, the Department can do little. It would, however, like to underline the following:

A) Several faculty members support students (mostly for research purposes) through their research grants. They will continue to do so.

B) The Department supports PhD students who wish to present their work at conferences (by covering travel and accommodation expenses).

C) It will explore more ways to secure external scholarships to support students.

The Department agrees with the final judgment of the EEC that it's compliant with quality indicators/criteria 2.1 and 2.2.

3. Administration

The Department agrees with the final judgment of the EEC that there **is high compliance** with all quality indicators/criteria in section 3 (Administration).

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study
4.2 Organisation of teaching

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

The Department agrees with the EEC that there is **high compliance** with all quality indicators/criteria.

4.2 Organisation of teaching

The Department agrees with the EEC that there is **high compliance** with all quality indicators/criteria.

The Department agrees with the final judgment of the EEC that there is high compliance with all quality indicators/criteria in section 4 (Learning and Teaching).

5. Teaching Staff

The EEC notes that there is **high compliance** with all quality indicators/criteria except for the following:

Point 5.1 (number of teaching staff) is marked as partially compliant (3) as it relates to Point 1.3.2 (also marked 3) and the number of faculty members employed in the Department. The ECC notes: "Replacements and new hires should be made strategically and as soon as possible, so as to not jeopardise the stability of the department's programmes." As noted above, the Department agrees with the EEC's recommendation, and it will request at least one new faculty position, by the end of the semester.

The Department also notes the high praise for its faculty (their impressive research output, publications, lectures/conference attendance, etc.).

The Department agrees with the final judgment of the EEC that there is high compliance with all quality indicators/criteria in section 5 (Learning and Teaching).

6. Research

The Department agrees with the EEC that there is high compliance with all quality indicators/criteria except for point 6.3, which is marked as "partially compliant" with the following explanation: "The EEC gives this area a 3 because, on the one hand, library resources are excellent, but, on the other hand, the Department's building infrastructure is substandard." This is similar to 2.2 above, where the EEC correctly noted that the Department's facilities are substandard and not conducive to teaching, learning, research, or even administrative work. The Department agrees with the EEC and will, once again, inform the administration about the urgency of securing a more appropriate building infrastructure, before the end of the semester. Once again, **the Department would like to note that academically it is ranked very high on all criteria. It hopes that the Administration shares its frustration that such a high ranking is undermined by the lamentable state of its building facilities.**

The Department agrees with the final judgment of the EEC that there is high compliance with all quality indicators/criteria in section 6.

7. Resources

The Department agrees with the EEC that there is **high compliance** with all quality indicators/criteria except for points 7.1, 7.4, and 7.7, which are marked as partially compliant (3). For points 7.3 and 7.4, the EEC notes that the Department's budget had been "drastically reduced" since the last evaluation. The Department makes every effort to ensure that the budget cuts do not affect important academic functions. The Department submits requests to the administration for supplementary allocations when needed, and it will continue to do so.

Point 7.7. is identical to points 2.2 and 6.3 above. Once again, "the EEC reiterates the blatant deficiencies noted above" in relation to the Department's building infrastructure. As we have already noted, we will submit urgent requests, during the Spring 2025 semester, to the administration demanding the department move to more appropriate premises.

The Department agrees with the final judgment of the EEC that there is high compliance with all quality indicators/criteria in section 7

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The Department is in full agreement with the EEC's concluding remarks and plans to take the following actions in accordance with the EEC's recommendations:

1. As soon as possible, and before the end of the spring semester, submit a request for at least one new faculty position to replace the retiring faculty. The Department notes that it will emphatically underline the EEC's findings and recommendations to the Administration, but the final decision depends on them.
2. Send a memorandum to the administration and the committee responsible for building infrastructure at the university, informing them of the EEC's findings and requesting the urgent move of the department to a more appropriate location. As the committee correctly notes, "the infrastructural support of the department is, at present, at an unacceptable level." This is the second time the EEC has found the building infrastructure substandard since the issue was also underlined in the 2020 report. We will take urgent action during the Spring 2025 semester, hoping that the issue is resolved soon.
3. In its subsequent meetings during the Spring 2025 semester, the Department will discuss ways to make the teaching staff's achievements better known. It has already approved the creation of social media accounts, and it will work with the marketing and communication teams at the University to promote the great achievements of the faculty and students. It will use any assistance the University offers to participate in or create podcasts, short videos, etc., to document these achievements. It is also in an ongoing dialogue with the Ministry of Education to promote the merits of pursuing Modern Greek Studies to high school students.

The Department would like to thank the EEC for ranking it very high academically. The three areas where it received low marks relate to a) its building premises b) the urgent need to secure new faculty positions, and c) the reduction in the number of graduate scholarships. All three issues are unrelated to the academic excellence of this department, as the EEC notes. They are all issues that the University Administration must address.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	*Position*	*Signature*
Marinos Pourgouris	Assistant Professor, Chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies	
Marilena Karyolaimou	Professor, Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies (Chair during the evaluation process)	
FullName	Position	
FullName	Position	
FullName	Position	
FullName	Position	

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