



Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 20/72021

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

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

Programme 1

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Master of Arts Degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), 90 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 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

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Department based on evidence from the Department's application and the site - visit.

The committee believes that this is an effective, cohesive academic unit, well-balanced between literature, (theoretical and applied) linguistics and translation, with clear objectives, and a very strong research orientation.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- There is a good leadership team.
- Students receive good academic support.
- Staff are caring and supportive.
- There is clear evidence of procedures that support research (e.g. special funds, the system of sabbaticals, and the supervision of students' research activities).
- The translation studies track is a clear and innovative addition to the department that can integrate with both literature and linguistics.
- The newly established MA in TESOL as an improvement on the earlier MA in TEFL seems to be addressing an existing need.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Staffing levels need to be improved in order for the Department to be able to deliver the programmes effectively in the future.

The Department might want to consider introducing a formal appraisal system on an annual or bi-annual cycle.

Response

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee for their excellent assessment of the Department's academic profile and orientation and for their very useful comments. We fully agree with the EEC's observation that the current staffing levels of the Department are inadequate in relation to the teaching needs that arise from the three-track undergraduate programme in *English Language and Literature* as well as the MA programmes offered by the Department. Indeed, the problem of understaffing has been one of the most significant impediments faced by the Department in the last few years, especially as positions vacated (due to death, retirement, or resignation) have not always been replaced by the University. In order for the Department to become fully functional again in terms of its MA programmes and to be able to deliver all of its programmes effectively, five new hirings must be made: more specifically, two more positions should be given to the Linguistics section (that is due to restart both its MA programs, the MA in *Theoretical and Applied Linguistics* and the MA in *TESOL*),



another two to the Literature section (that is due to launch a new MA in *English Studies*), and one more position to the Translation section. We have alerted the University to these needs (in our submission of the Department's Strategic Planning for 2021-2025) and we hope that these will be taken into account by the University authorities in the next distribution of faculty positions, especially given the upcoming retirement of another faculty member of the Department in 2022. Regarding the EEC'S suggestions about the introduction of a formal appraisal system, we would like to note that the Department cannot implement such a system as that is not stipulated by the rules and regulations of the University. Further, such changes can only be introduced within the Departments on the basis of University-wide decisions that will first be discussed and approved by the Senate and other relevant bodies of the University.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

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

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Department based on evidence from the Department's application and the site - visit.

The Department has clear formal instruments and procedures to assess quality at different levels. Staff and administrators are involved in quality assurance both formally and informally.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- The system of academic advisors (academic monitoring) is very effective.
- The collaboration between academic and administrative staff is good.
- There is clear guidance for students on issues such as plagiarism, etc.
- Student feedback is acted upon.
- Data are available about graduated students' employment status.
- The University has excellent library facilities (including digital resources) and support, especially for students with special needs, is good.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

We have no reasons for concern - as long as government funding is ensured and to the extent that staff members are keen on pursuing competitive research grant opportunities.

Response

We would like to thank the EEC for their outstanding evaluation of the Department's policies and processes for quality assurance. We will make sure to uphold these standards in the future, with a view to maintaining the excellent level of teaching and research in the Department.

3. Administration

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Department based on evidence from the Department's application and the site - visit.

Based on evidence from the Department's application and our meetings, the committee is satisfied that all administrative procedures are in place.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- The Department has experienced and helpful office staff.
- The Departmental Board operates transparently and includes members of all sections and also student representatives.
- Effective, clear and well-documented administrative procedures are in place.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

We have no reasons for concern.

Response

We are very pleased with the EEC's excellent evaluation of our administrative procedures and we would like to thank the members of the committee for their positive feedback.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Department based on evidence from the Department's application and the site - visit.

Teaching and learning are very-well organised and professional. We met students and graduates who were extremely positive about the learning and teaching experience in the Department.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- All courses are well-documented.
- There are clearly formulated aims and objectives.
- Students are generally very satisfied about their programme and teachers.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Even though the committee is convinced the teaching programmes are well-managed, the details are not explicitly formulated in the self-assessment report.

Response

We would like to thank the EEC for their excellent evaluation of our performance in the areas of teaching and learning. We were particularly pleased with the Committee's comments concerning the immensely positive feedback they received from our students and graduates about their learning experience in our Department and the high quality of teaching that we offer. Concerning the EEC's comment under "Areas of improvement and recommendations," we regret that we were unable to provide further details about our programmes of study in the self-assessment report. This is due to the fact that the relevant CYQAA documents that we were required to submit for the purpose of the Departmental Evaluation did not include a section in which we could offer such details. However, further information about our teaching programmes (e.g. programme structures, course distribution per semester, ECTS, and course outlines) were provided, as required, in our applications to CYQAA for the evaluation and accreditation of each individual programme, as they were in our application documents for our MA in TESOL that was evaluated along with the Department. Also, detailed information about our programmes of study and about the courses on offer each semester is publicly advertised on the website of the Department (<http://ucy.ac.cy/eng/en/#>), under "Academic Programmes."

5. Teaching Staff

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Department based on evidence from the Department's application and the site - visit.

The teaching staff seem to have competence within their expertise, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The committee was not expected to evaluate the details of the BA programme (or MA programmes other than the MA in TESOL) and our assessment does not include these.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- Staff are highly dedicated, enthusiastic and caring.
- Staff have excellent, often outstanding, research profiles.
- Staff collaborate internationally.
- Staff have degrees from universities across the world.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The committee would like to emphasise strongly that to ensure the viability of all programmes and to maintain the high quality of both research and teaching in the future permanent staffing needs to be adequate in all areas.

Response

Once again, we wish to thank the EEC for this very positive evaluation of the teaching staff of the Department. As already noted, we agree with the EEC's suggestions regarding the need for more adequate staffing and we hope that in the future, we will be able to make all the hirings that are necessary for us to maintain the high quality of teaching and research in the Department.

6. Research

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Department based on evidence from the Department's application and the site - visit.

The committee is impressed with the Department's high quality research output. All staff are actively engaged in research.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- Staff are offered the opportunity to periodically take sabbatical leave.
- Newly appointed staff are awarded support and internal funding to spend on databases and other research tools.
- Permanent staff have access to funding to cover conference visits and other research costs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The committee has no concerns.

Response

We were very pleased with the EEC's outstanding evaluation of our Department's research output and we wish to thank the members of the committee for all their positive comments.

7. Resources

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Department based on evidence from the Department's application and the site - visit.

Financial issues were not part of the discussions during our visit. According to the Department's self-evaluation, the financial affairs of the Department are carried out in a financially sound and transparent manner and are controlled by the Finance Department of the University.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Good procedures seem to be in place to control finances.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The committee does not have any comments.

Response

The Department will make sure to maintain its sound and transparent financial procedures in the future.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The committee was pleased with the documentation at every level that was provided in advance of the visit. It enjoyed meeting staff, students and administrators to hear their view and for answering the committee's questions.

The committee takes the view that the Department of English Studies at the University of Cyprus offers a lively, vibrant and intellectually stimulating environment for teaching and learning for both staff and students. Its enthusiastic staff has high levels of expertise and excellent, international research reputations. The committee found there to be a high level of collegiality and respect, as well as balance, between and across distinct disciplines. Teaching is effective and highly appreciated by students who report that their teachers respond quickly with feedback on their work. The Department actively engages with the local community through outreach and knowledge exchange.

We found that on the whole the Department of English Studies is well-organized.

The Department complies fully with procedures, values, regulations, and the mission set out by the Institution and places a high value on quality assurance. There is a commitment to improving the quality of the core deliverables in the areas of teaching/learning and research excellence.

The committee was impressed with the facilities, especially the new library building, as evidenced by the PowerPoint slideshow.

Despite the committee's overall very positive evaluation, it does have concerns about staffing levels in the Department. It is clear that in the present situation, permanent staff numbers are inadequate and the University should urgently address this issue for the future.

Response

It was a great pleasure for us to meet with the EEC and we are very happy to have received their expert feedback. Once again, we would like to thank the members of the committee for their excellent evaluation of our Department and we express our gratitude for the time they devoted to this task and for their professionalism. As already mentioned, we share the committee's concerns about the Department's staffing levels and we hope that the University will respond to our request for the hiring of an adequate number of permanent staff members that will enable us to properly support the teaching needs of our programmes and maintain the high level of our overall performance.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Stella Achilleos	Associate Professor, Department Chair	
Antonis Balasopoulos	Associate Professor, Dean of Humanities	
Kleanthes K. Grohmann	Professor of Biolinguistics	
Georgios Floros	Associate Professor in Translation Studies	
Phoevos Panagiotidis	Professor of Theoretical Linguistics	

Date: 20/7/21

