

Doc. 300.3.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

Date: 28 April, 2021

- Higher Education Institution: University of Cyprus
- Town: Nicosia
- School/Faculty: Pure and Applied Sciences
- Department: Biological Sciences
- Programme(s) of study under evaluation: None (all programs of study are accredited)
- 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

OVERALL COMMENTS OF THE EEC

Findings

The department has two scientific streams: 1) molecular, cellular & developmental biology and 2) ecology, evolution & biodiversity. These are well-supported by staff expertise. Their teaching covers all bioscience with advanced degree courses in each stream. Topics not represented by staff research include practical structural biology, plant science and marine biology/ecology. Some are nonetheless taught at the undergraduate level.

Strengths

The research output and recognition are impressive for the resources available. The BSc. and MSc. curricula are well-designed with excellent opportunity for exposure to practical laboratory experience. There is active participation and communication between all stakeholders. The staff-student ratio is favorable for effective interactions and the training atmosphere is positive.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Development of a strategic plan as soon as possible is recommended with the considerations noted above. Consider how to expand offerings in areas where further expertise might be limiting through local collaboration. For example, collaboration with a nationwide effort in marine biology or agricultural research could be an option.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
1.1 Mission and strategic planning	Non Compliant
1.2 Connecting with society	Partially Compliant
1.3 Development processes	Partially Compliant

RESPONSE OF THE HEI

The Department would like to thank the EEC for their effort and thorough analysis, and we do agree with the assessment of the EEC as stated in the "Findings", the "Strengths" and the "Areas of improvement and recommendations".

Findings

We agree with the findings of the EEC. While we try to expand our offerings in areas not covered in the department through collaborations we certainly acknowledge that this is only effective to a certain extent. To improve on this, our strategic plan (see Appendix I) includes a

specific strategy for new faculty recruitment, which will provide better and more permanent coverage of specific fields of expertise. For the time being, some of these scientific areas such as botany and GIS (geographic information system and remote sensing) are currently covered through the employment of special scientists and/or visiting faculty on a semester basis. We do note that in the field of marine biology we employ Dr. Niki Chartosia since 2019 in the position of Special Teaching Staff (tenure-track position). We also expect to add one additional tenure-track faculty member within 2021 in a complementary area of expertise, provided that the ongoing hiring process, which is at an advanced stage, is officially approved by the relevant University bodies. Additional information is provided below, in point 1.1.2.

Strengths

The EEC outlines accurately the strengths of the department and we agree with their assessment. The Department constantly strives to maintain high quality and up-to-date curricula for six of its programs of study and has been further enriching and developing the curricula every time a new teaching member joins the Department. We also consider practical laboratory and/or field training of utmost importance for all programs of study with a research-based thesis included even in the undergraduate program of study. The favorable staff-student ratio is certainly a key factor that allows for the effective interaction and high-quality training.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

Regarding the formulation of a more detailed strategic plan, we have acknowledged the importance and urgency and has thus formulated a five-year strategic plan for the Department. This Departmental strategic plan will be integrated within the overall five-year strategic plan of the University while taking into consideration the recommendations of the EEC. A summary of the five-year strategic plan is provided in Appendix I

Several of the faculty research programs involve local and international collaborations which are funded through grants and as a result additional exposure, training and expertise are offered to students of the department. These collaborations also emerge through our scientific publications and in Appendix I we provide an indicative list of collaborating national and international institutions.

DEFICIENCIES NOTED UNDER THE QUALITY INDICATORS

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

1.1 Mission and Strategic Planning

1.1.1	The Department has formally adopted a mission statement, which is available to the public and easily accessible.	3
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In response to the comments of the EEC, we have more clearly articulated our mission statement, which is now available on the departmental website (<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/biol/en/generalInformation>).

The mission of the Department of Biological Sciences is to advance research and teaching across a broad range of disciplines and at scales ranging from molecules and cells to ecosystems and biomes. We strive to foster a collaborative, engaging environment, where undergraduate and graduate students participate in cutting-edge research using state-of-the-art facilities in the laboratory and the field. We are committed to providing the experiences that

will develop critical thinking in our graduates, to inspire them to make contributions towards the advancement of science, and the improvement of human health, the environment, and society.

1.1.2	The Department has developed its strategic planning aiming at fulfilling its mission.	2
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The Department is currently in the process of developing a new five-year strategic plan based on guidance related to the overall five-year strategic plan of the University of Cyprus (UCY), which was approved in March 2021. In response to the comments of the EEC the Department has already set forth specific areas as the main foci of the strategic plan and has formulated a summary of its goals (see Appendix I).

The goals prioritized in our plan are based both on the general strategic plan of the University as well as on the specific goals of the Department, several of which fulfill the comments of the EEC.

A key focus of planning is the development of a clear strategy regarding future faculty employments. Due to the small size of the Department, future hires will prioritize strengthening existing research areas of study in ways that will create synergies between new hires and existing members. Preference will be given to excellent candidates advancing fields that also support our M.Sc. and Ph.D. programs of study. Specifically, future faculty hires over the next five years, will be complementary to general research areas already represented in the department (e.g., molecular and cell biology, developmental biology, genetics, epigenetics, cancer biology, infectious diseases, ecology and evolutionary biology, biodiversity, bioinformatics), and will prioritize recruiting expertise in technological approaches/model systems which can strengthen existing research programs. This will enable new hires to hit the ground running by taking advantage of already-available infrastructure and will simultaneously enrich current research groups by providing increased opportunity for collaborative endeavors. This approach will support synergies between faculty members as recommended by the EEC.

In reference to new hires through joint faculty appointments, as suggested by the EEC, we do agree that this would enrich the scientific expertise of the Department with significantly less financial cost to the University. However, current UCY Laws and Regulations do not permit joint appointments. It should be noted however that more than half of current faculty collaborate with members in other UCY departments including: the Medical School and the Departments of Physics, Chemistry, Electrical/Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering. To further foster synergies in multidisciplinary areas, the Department has decided to identify potential local and international funding opportunities in multidisciplinary research areas that encompass our expertise, and present this information during staff meetings. This will incentivize current and future faculty to expand further and sustain their collaborations with colleagues in other departments who already work in areas related to biology. Thus, we consider that new faculty employments will cover existing and future needs of the Department even in the absence of joint appointments and will avert diluting the Department focus.

1.1.3	The Department's strategic planning includes short, medium-term and long-term goals and objectives, which are periodically revised and adapted.	2
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Taking into consideration the recommendations of the EEC, the Department has set forth a strategic plan (see Appendix I and Section 1.1.2) with clear goals and objectives. Based on

new University procedures, the Department will assess the progress of these goals and objectives and revise them as needed on an annual basis.

1.1.7	The mechanism for collecting and analysing data and indicators needed to effectively design the Department's academic development is adequate and effective.	1
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Based on the new strategic plan, the Department will be preparing annual reports to evaluate whether goals are met. We will effectively utilize university administrative services to support the work of collecting and analyzing data/indicators wherever appropriate and to avoid work duplication. For example, data on alumni is collected via the UCY alumni office (<https://ucy.ac.cy/alumni/en/who-we-are/mission>).

Comments of the EEC

We were favorably impressed by the breadth and accomplishments of the department. We recognize that the department would benefit by a clear mission statement and strategic planning to appropriately expand into and take advantage of the new building. We applaud the department for their awareness of this need. In their future strategic planning we recommend consideration of the following: 1) building on current strengths; 2) promoting sharing of intellectual resources through strategic hiring (eg computational biology); 3) teaching needs; 4) funding opportunities. New hiring might be achieved by joint appointments with other departments, which would also promote interdisciplinarity. The department should consider how to support (or expand) both streams that are currently strong and in which they offer MSc and PhD programs. While appreciating the need to include underrepresented areas such as plant science and structural biology, it would be advisable to not become too dilute.

Response of the HEI

We have taken into serious consideration the recommendations of the EEC and have addressed them. For the purposes of this report, we formulated a mission statement and a strategic plan for the Department (see points 1.1.1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.3 above). This is part of a comprehensive five-year departmental strategic plan, which we are currently in the process of formulating as part of our University's request (see Appendix I). The goals set forth are based both on the requirements of strategic plan of the University, as well as on the specific goals of the Department, several of which are also highlighted by the comments of the EEC. In relation to future new faculty employments, we decided to strengthen even further the departmental expertise in fields that also support our M.Sc. and Ph.D. programs of study. Specifically, based on our newly formulated strategic plan (points 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 above) future faculty employments over the next five years will be in fields aimed at strengthening existing ones, as recommended by the EEC. In reference to new hires through joint faculty appointments as suggested by the EEC, although we do agree that this would enrich the scientific expertise of the Department with significantly less financial cost to the University, current UCY Laws and Regulations do not permit joint appointments (see point 1.1.2 above). However, we consider that *de novo* faculty employments will cover the existing and future needs of the Department.

DEFICIENCIES NOTED UNDER THE QUALITY INDICATORS

1.2 Connecting with society

1.2.2	The Department provides sufficient information to the public about its activities and offered programmes of study.	3
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In light of the comments of the EEC, the Department has formalized new guidelines to (a) advertise our programs of study, and (b) publicize at regular intervals our newly acquired funding, awards received, and new publications. This advertising/publicizing will be through the University of Cyprus Press Office, the Departmental website and Departmental social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). The Postgraduate seminars and open positions for our postgraduate programs of study will also be advertised through these media.

Available positions for our Postgraduate Programs of study have recently been advertised on the website of the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA) at (<https://www.unica-network.eu/university-of-cyprus-announcements/>). A copy of the posting is provided in Appendix I.

1.2.3	The Department ensures that its operation and activities have a positive impact on society.	N/A
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Faculty members participate in several national committees based on their field of expertise such as a.) The Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KY.Σ.A.T.Σ.), b.) Ministry of Education Committee in designing books for Secondary Education, c.) National Committee for the Welfare of Animals used in Research, d) the Scientific Advisory Committee of the President of the Republic of Cyprus for COVID-19, e.) participation with NGO's such as Bird Life Cyprus. Faculty also participate in radio and television programs to inform the public regarding areas of their expertise, and the Department also offers scientific seminars that are open to the public. Six faculty members were among the founding members of the Society of Biological Sciences in Cyprus (SBSCy) and two are currently serving on its Acting Board. One of our faculty is also a founding member of the Cypriot Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts and a Member of the Biosciences Steering Panel of the European Academies Science Advisory Council, ESAC. Furthermore, the department co-organises events with other societal organisations such as symposia with the high-school Biology teachers association.

1.2.4	The Department has an effective communication mechanism with its graduates.	3
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The University of Cyprus has a dedicated Development and Alumni Relations Office to keep in touch with graduates. One of the main objectives of this Office, is to facilitate the creation of a lifelong community of both graduates and other members of the university community, through the provision of information, services and opportunities for meaningful participation and engagement. To boost the participation of our future graduates in the alumni community, the Department will further promote the actions of the Alumni Office, via email announcements to students, encouraging them to sign up upon graduation.

Comments of the EEC

The department has a good sense of their role in offering basic biology to Cyprus' higher education (vs. medically-oriented biology in other institutions). Regarding public contribution, staff are playing a role in the government's Covid management. The department has included consideration of public engagement in training undergraduates and this is encouraged. We further encourage more interaction with department alumni as administrative capacity permits.

Response of the HEI

It is noted that departmental faculty do keep in touch with alumni whom they supervised for their Ph.D. thesis.

Furthermore, the Department has now established three new procedures to strengthen the link with our alumni:

- To send an email announcement to students towards the end of each semester, providing information to the Alumni Office and encouraging them to sign up upon graduation.
- To provide to the public and graduates, who join our social media accounts or who visit our website, with news updates on the Department.
- To invite alumni in future departmental retreats to participate in order to enhance their interaction with the Department.

1.3 Development processes

1.3.1	Effective procedures and measures are in place to attract and select teaching staff to ensure that they possess the formal and substantive skills to teach, carry out research and effectively carry out their work.	3
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Regarding hires of special teaching staff and special scientists for teaching, our existing procedures ensure that we select the best candidate. Our criteria include possession of a Ph.D. degree, proven research experience based on published work and previous teaching experience at university level.

In relation to hires at tenure track faculty level, the selection criteria specifically evaluate the candidates' ability and experience to conduct both independent, high-quality research and to have teaching skills. It is noted that the Centre for Teaching & Learning of the University of Cyprus provides teaching seminars, so that new and existing faculty can enhance or develop their teaching skills.

1.3.2	Planning teaching staff recruitment and their professional development is in line with the Department's academic development plan.	2
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In light of the EEC's recommendations, the Departmental Council has reached a decision on the fields of expertise of future tenure-track teaching faculty (see point 1.1.2 above). In all

faculty hires, a big part in the evaluation of the candidates, is not only their contribution to science and their teaching skills but also their potential for continued growth and career advancement.

To better support the career advancement of faculty members we have decided to prepare and implement an academic development plan. We have sought guidance from colleagues at the Faculty of Economics and Management who have recently implemented a similar mentoring scheme. We have adapted their plan to better suit our department and have included its implementation as part of our five-year strategic plan. In brief, this mentoring scheme will mainly focus guidance from senior faculty members towards junior faculty members and this will be achieved through a departmental committee that will oversee this mentorship.

1.3.3	The Department applies an effective strategy of attracting high-level students from Cyprus and abroad.	3
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The Department follows different procedures for entry in its undergraduate versus its graduate programs of study.

Regarding undergraduate admissions, the University of Cyprus is a public university and thus it is bound by governmental legislature to (a) accept undergraduate students mainly through a national university entry exam and (b) teach most undergraduate courses in Greek. As a result, more than 90% of our undergraduate students are Cypriot and Greek-speaking. A very small percentage of students, approximately 10%, are accepted in the undergraduate program based on other criteria, such as international examinations (i.e. GCE A' Level exams) or national examinations for university entry in Greece or through transfer applications. As a result, the Department does not have the option of planning a strategy for accepting undergraduate students using any other criteria. Even so, the undergraduate students, who join the Department, are among those with the highest grades in the national university entry exam.

With regards to the postgraduate programs of study, the Department has the freedom to decide on admission criteria. Since 2018, the Department changed the teaching language of all its postgraduate programs from Greek to English. The strategic goal was to also attract non-Greek speaking or international students. Students are selected among a pool of applicants based on academic achievements and following an in-person interview with the members of the Postgraduate Studies Committee of the Department. Over the past few years, the Department strives to further promote its programs of study through advertising. Through a new Departmental Council decision, the Department has decided to allocate at least two thousand (2,000) Euros of its “own revenue” funds per year for advertising our postgraduate programs through social and traditional media. Besides paid advertisement, the Department also utilizes other platforms to promote its programs of study such as, the website of the University of Cyprus and the website of the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA) and through circulation of our recently-created advertising flyer (see Appendix I). Furthermore, our programs of study receive further promotion through centralized actions of the University and the Promotion and Development Section (<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/pr/en/general-information>).

1.3.4	The funding processes for the operation of the Department and the continuous improvement of the quality of its programmes of study are adequate and transparent.	3
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Funding for the operation of the Department is allocated on an annual basis by the University with full transparency, as required by governmental legislature and University regulations. We therefore consider the funding processes adequate and transparent because the University is accountable to the Auditor General of the Republic of Cyprus. We expect that the funding process will be further improved, since the University is currently in the process of switching to an electronic governance platform.

The continuous improvement of the quality of our programs of study is a major focus for the Department. This is achieved through the departmental Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies Committees, which continually assess and improve our programs of study. For example, over the years, these Committees have made many revisions to our programs of study and continue to do so, in an effort to provide both a specialized and well-rounded education. Historically, with the employment of every new tenure-track faculty member, new courses have been added to the programs of study, based on the field of expertise of the new faculty member. It is noted that all of the programs of study of the Department have been recently evaluated and received accreditation by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

Comments of the EEC

The department has a vision for increasing international students but this is hampered by the history of a language requirement. The situation could improve as more courses are taught in English.

Based on information provided: 80% Cypriot students; 20% international from Africa, other European countries

Response of the HEI

We acknowledge the comments of the EEC. This issue has also been a concern for the Department for several years. To this end, through initiatives of the Department and the University, since 2018, all coursework in the Master's and Ph.D. programs of study of the Department is offered exclusively in English.

The undergraduate program of studies, however, is taught in Greek due to legislature restrictions (see point 1.3.3), with the exception of a few courses to accommodate ERASMUS+ students. Considering that the majority of the Departmental student body is comprised of undergraduate students, who are required to have fluency in Greek, and that this is a state-funded university, the majority of students are of Cypriot nationality. However, we do strive to attract foreign students in our Master's and Ph.D. program and are actively advertising our programs of study. As indicated above in point 1.3.3, as of 2021 we have allocated an annual budget of at least two thousand (2,000) Euros per year for advertising our postgraduate programs through electronic, social and traditional media. The programs of study also receive additional promotion through centralized efforts of the University and through circulation of advertising flyers such as the one attached in Appendix I.

Furthermore, we expect to see an increase in the number of new students through future teaching staff recruitment, as specified in the strategic plan of the Department, since this would provide additional scientific areas and more research supervisors for thesis projects.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

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

OVERALL COMMENTS OF THE EEC

Findings

It is evident that the department takes compliance with university regulations into account in the activities discussed. The department will move into a new building to be completed in 2023. The support for doctoral students is limited due to reduced tuition support. This leads to unusually long PhD training periods relative to many other European countries.

Strengths

The completion of a new building to house the department will strongly enhance the research and training situation. The library provides excellent support to the department.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The situation regarding the length of the doctoral training and support needs to be addressed.

Please ✓ what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
2.1 System and quality assurance strategy	Compliant
2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study	Partially Compliant

RESPONSE OF THE HEI

Findings

We agree with the findings of the EEC. The Department fully complies with the University regulations in ensuring the quality of all activities. We also project that the Department will have further significant expansion in activities, personnel and infrastructure once the new building is completed in 2023.

In reference to financial support for doctoral students, our Department does not have the financial means to provide full scholarship for most, if not all, students, as the common practice in many universities in Europe and the United States. Moreover, current University rules and legislature does not allow fee waivers for doctoral students. Having said that, we address this issue in more detail in several sections of this report, including section 7 below.

We agree with the EEC that some of our doctoral students take a longer than usual time to graduate. We address this point below, in the 'Areas of improvement and recommendations' section.

Strengths

The EEC outlines accurately the strengths of the department, as well as the excellent service we receive from the university library.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

We agree with the EEC that the duration of PhD studies for some students is sometimes unusually long compared to other European programs.

Thus, to make our PhD program more attractive and increase competitiveness of our doctoral graduates in the international market, the Departmental Council has recently approved the Postgraduate Committee proposal to modify essential aspects of the program that will facilitate shorter duration of doctoral studies.

In particular, we have agreed to introduce earlier deadlines for the Comprehensive exam (Qualifying exam) and the Research Proposal exam. In addition, we have decided to allow PhD candidates to choose (in consultation with their Research Supervisor) the subject of their Comprehensive exam which could be in the area of their PhD research (previously we expected them to prepare a proposal on a subject different from their PhD research). We believe that these changes will facilitate our candidates to complete all exam requirements at earlier stages during their PhD training and, consequently, they will have the opportunity to focus and complete their research project within a shorter time frame.

DEFICIENCIES NOTED UNDER THE QUALITY INDICATORS

2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

2.2.12	The Department ensures adequate and appropriate learning resources in line with European and international standards and/or international practices, particularly:		
	2.2.12.1	Building facilities	3
	2.2.12.3	Rooms for theoretical, practical and laboratory lessons	3

The University is currently in the process of constructing a new building that will house the Department, which is expected to be completed around 2023. Therefore, for the next 2 to 3 years (that is, until the new building is completed), the Department is housed in other existing building facilities at the university campus. Although our current spaces may not be optimal, they are sufficient to cover all of our immediate needs. With regards to rooms for theoretical teaching, the Department has access to all common teaching classrooms of the University.

Importantly, a significant improvement to our current space situation is already underway, as the University has recently allocated to the Department additional space (approximately 125 m²) to house student offices and research laboratories. These are currently being renovated and expected to be in use some time in 2021. Once the new building is completed, it will cover not only existing needs with regards to building facilities and teaching rooms, but will also cover the future needs of the Department as the number of personnel and students increase.

2.2.18	The Department has mechanisms and funds to support writing and attending conferences of doctoral candidates.	1
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We agree with the EEC on the importance of a department-wide opportunity for grants supporting student participation at international conferences. So far this has been the responsibility of individual labs and supported by research grants and research activities funds allocated annually by the university to each lab. Furthermore, this was possible through sponsorships provided as awards to students for their presentations during the Departmental retreat. For instance, over the calendar years 2019 and 2020, 18 students were supported to attend conferences, either from existing grants, university “research activities” funds allocated to each lab every year, or from awards from conference organisers. Considering that many conferences are now taking place virtually we expect a higher participation from our students within this year, since it will be relatively more cost effective to register and easier to attend.

However, it is still important to have an arrangement through which students will be supported to attend conferences. Therefore, we propose to utilise a portion of the Department’s “own revenue” funds (mainly from postgraduate tuition fees) that would support 3 students to attend an international conference each year. The support would be for 750 Euro per student, for 3 students per year, and go towards airfare and conference registration, with the student’s research lab responsible for providing *Per Diem*. Such a scheme is in line with those of other universities internationally. In order to provide this opportunity to more students, previous recipients of this conference travel support will not be eligible to apply for it in subsequent years. Both graduate and undergraduate students would be eligible to apply.

With regards to providing mechanisms to support writing, our Department currently offers to students two mandatory lectures as part of our Postgraduate Seminar series, on how to write a scientific review paper and on how to prepare a scientific poster. Furthermore, Ph.D. students have the opportunity to attend two additional training seminar sessions on the search and management of bibliographic resources. Our Department is committed to provide additional writing support to our doctoral candidates by enriching its soft-skills training seminars. Therefore, faculty of the department will from now on provide on an annual basis an additional postgraduate seminar on professional email-writing. It is also worth noting, that our students are exposed to scientific writing also through advanced postgraduate courses, which incorporate writing assignments, such as writing paper abstracts and article reviews, preparing posters etc.

2.2.19	There is a clear policy on authorship and intellectual property.	N/A
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A policy on authorship and intellectual property is established by the UCY. The Department complies with those policies.

Comments of the EEC

A new building to house the department is in progress to provide adequate space and facilities. The score represents the intermediate situation. Resources to support conference travel for doctoral students were not evident. The department respects the need for mature students to work for supporting their studies. However, this leads to an awkward extension of the time needed to complete the doctoral degree.

Response of the HEI



We fully agree with the EEC that the current situation regarding the housing of the Department needs improvement and that this will be solved once the construction of the new building is completed. In the meantime, as explained in points 2.2.12 above, the Department has adequate space and facilities and is in the process of acquiring extra office and lab-space within 2021, as these spaces have already been allocated to us by the university and are currently being renovated.

We agree with the EEC in reference to financial support for doctoral students, as well as finding ways to reduce their duration of studies. We have addressed these issues in point 2.2.18 above and in section 7 below.

3. Administration

OVERALL COMMENTS OF THE EEC

Findings

The department has excellent administrative support but not sufficient. The same was observed for technical assistance.

Strengths

The current staff members are highly motivated and multi-tasking.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The situation would be improved by an additional administrator to assist with student records and grant finances. Two technical staff to support research would improve training, research and funding opportunities; a staff member to look after general services, small equipment repair and a staff member to oversee training and usage of more sophisticated shared equipment. Promotion opportunities for existing administrative staff might be considered to avoid losing them.

RESPONSE OF THE HEI

Findings

We fully agree with the findings of the EEC that the existing technical and administrative staff provides excellent support to the Department.

Strengths

The EEC accurately assessed that our current staff members are highly motivated and multi-tasking.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

We agree with the recommendations of the EEC that the Department will benefit from
(a) an additional administrator to assist with student records and grant finances
(b) a technical staff to look after general services and small equipment repair
(c) a technical staff to oversee training and usage of more sophisticated shared equipment
(d) promotion opportunities of existing administrative staff within the department.
We provide solutions to all these in section 3.3 below.

DEFICIENCIES NOTED UNDER THE QUALITY INDICATORS

3.3	The administrative staff adequately supports the operation of the Department.	3
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We are glad that the EEC acknowledges that our administrative and technical assistant staff are “highly competent”, “very motivated” and “multi-tasking” and that they provide “excellent” support to the Department. We agree with the EEC’s assessment that our administrative and technical support staff are “over-worked”, that their support is “not sufficient” and that this situation could be improved by the following 4 suggestions from the EEC.

1. The EEC suggests “an additional administrator to assist with student records and grant finances”. Our response is that we have done the following three things:

(a) We arranged for one of our existing administrative staff to work extra hours (on average, 2 to 3 extra hours daily). She has started offering this service and is being paid for her overtime work by Departmental funds.

(b) Our Department has secured the contribution of an additional administrative personnel to handle grant finances. This new administrative position (expected to begin in May 2021) will be shared with three other Departments of the ‘School of Pure and Applied Sciences’ of the University, since this position was granted to this School. The selection process of an appropriate candidate has already been completed and will need approval through the University ranks.

(c) We have recently sent an official request to the University for an additional position of administrative staff (secretarial staff) to provide additional assistance with student records and grant finances.

2. The EEC suggests hiring “a staff member to look after general services, small equipment repair”. Our Department currently employs a technical person part-time (working five days a week on average 2 to 3 hours per day) who covers all the needs for the repair and maintenance of departmental equipment and he is also available for emergency calls around the clock. This individual also works for the adjacent Chemistry Department and therefore he has immediate access and is already experienced/familiar with the types of equipment we use in our Department. His remuneration is currently covered by Departmental funds, but the department requested that he should be paid through a central University budget in order to alleviate departmental funds.

3. The EEC suggests hiring “a staff member to oversee training and usage of more sophisticated shared equipment”. Our response is that our Department has officially agreed to request from the University to create and approve one position for laboratory technician whose main task will be to oversee training and usage of sophisticated shared equipment used for imaging, cell sorting, genomic library preparations, etc. To this end, we have already sent an official letter to our University requesting such a position (laboratory technician).

4. The EEC suggests that “promotion opportunities for existing administrative staff might be considered to avoid losing them”. We agree with this recommendation and consequently, we made inquiries from various bodies of the University to get information about such promotion opportunities for our departmental staff. However, according to University rules and legislature (which require parliamentary approval in order to be changed) straight-forward promotions of administrative personnel within any of the University departments are not allowed. Such promotions are handled centrally at the University and all administrative employees have the right to compete for the available promotion opportunities. Therefore, when such positions are granted, (a) those eligible to apply are not restricted to members of our Department, but to all administrative personnel of the University, (b) the committee that oversees these applications is assigned centrally by the University, and (c) there is a high possibility that the promotion will not be given to a current member of our Department. Despite these limitations in the promotion system, in order to provide an opportunity for promotion to our administrative staff, we have officially requested from the University for two “promotion” positions, namely one position of “Secretarial Officer” and one for “University Officer A’ ”.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

OVERALL COMMENTS OF THE EEC

Findings

The programs are generally well-received by the students but some constructive suggestions were made about specialization that the external evaluation panel would like to highlight.

Strengths

A major strength is the engagement of the academic staff in teaching and in delivering laboratory experiences at all levels.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

There are challenges posed by the diversity of students admitted to the programs. Some students are overqualified and some under-qualified. Balancing training opportunities to fill in gaps such as statistics and basic chemistry might need to be addressed.

The advanced undergraduates were interested in offerings that allow more specialization during their degree. It is noted by the external evaluation panel that this may be enhanced by increasing the number of faculty and scope when the new building is completed, which, as a consequence, might also attract more students.

A second consideration is the role of the written requirements in PhD training. Feedback from the students was that their training is excessively long due to their financial burden and the need to work, so that the time spent on preparing a comprehensive exam on a topic unrelated to their research is a burden. They welcomed the opportunity to write sooner about their planned degree project and to update every year. The panel was supportive of this suggestion or reduction of the time to degree, which would require financial support from the university.

RESPONSE OF THE HEI

Findings

We agree with the findings of the EEC that the planning of the programs of study are both well-received by the students and are also fully compliant with the requirements of the University and the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance Accreditation in Higher Education.

Strengths

The EEC outlines accurately the strengths of the Department. The high ratio of faculty to students, allows for a very effective and high-quality hands-on training for all levels of study.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

We agree with the comments of the EEC regarding the opportunities for specialization of our undergraduate students. Our undergraduate program of study has been designed to provide students with a well-rounded training in the field of biological sciences instead of a more

specialized one, because this provides alumni with more diverse options for further education or career paths. At the present time, students do have the option to focus more on either Biodiversity and Ecology or Molecular and Cell Biology through the departmental elective courses, which they must complete as part of the degree requirements. Undergraduate students then do specialize in a specific field by spending an academic year performing their undergraduate thesis project in one of the labs of our diverse faculty. The EEC correctly points out that as the number of faculty of the Department increases, our undergraduate students will have more extensive opportunities for specialization in a particular topic.

We further agree with the EEC that there is a diverse postgraduate student body with some overqualified and some under-qualified. This is a widespread phenomenon internationally where institutions offer both Master and PhD programs and the same postgraduate courses are taken by students in both programs, but also between students who embark on postgraduate studies straight after their undergraduate studies and mature students with much further experience. We have long addressed these issues of gaps between students with diverse backgrounds by requiring students that lack sufficient background in a certain field to take undergraduate courses in these fields such as statistics and basic chemistry, but also within the biological sciences where those might be needed to bring those students up to speed.

The EEC also points out student concerns about the written requirements of the Comprehensive Examination, in that it may be a burden for doctoral students in its current form and may contribute to the lengthening of their studies. As a result, our Departmental Council has recently approved the proposal to modify essential aspects of our doctoral program that will shorten its duration, mainly through changes to the Comprehensive exam. Specifically, we have introduced earlier deadlines for the Comprehensive exam (Qualifying exam) and the Research Proposal exam and have decided to allow PhD candidates to choose the subject of their Comprehensive exam proposal, allowing them to focus this time more directly on their PhD research, whereas previously they were expected to prepare a proposal on a different topic to that of their PhD research. This ensures that students can complete their studies at the earliest in three (3) years if they already have a Master's degree, or four (4) years if they do not. We believe that these changes will (a) facilitate our PhD students to complete all exam requirements sooner and will allow them to focus entirely on their research following completion of their course requirements and (b) shorten the duration of doctoral studies, thereby reducing the students' financial burden.

DEFICIENCIES NOTED UNDER THE QUALITY INDICATORS

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

Comments of the EEC

The comprehensive exam has been criticized by some students as this exam prolongs the duration of PhD training.

Response of the HEI

We agree with the EEC that for some doctoral candidates the comprehensive exam contributes to the prolonged duration of their studies. Of note, the comprehensive exam corresponds to the Qualifying exam of other institutions, and is required for all doctoral candidates of the University of Cyprus according to the UCY Graduate School rules. Since the Department is only allowed to introduce specific changes to the timing and content of this exam, the Departmental Council has recently approved a proposal by our departmental Postgraduate Committee that modified essential aspects of the program aimed at shortening the duration of doctoral studies. In particular, we have introduced earlier deadlines for the Comprehensive exam and the Research Proposal exam. In addition, we have decided to allow PhD candidates to freely choose in consultation with their research advisor the subject of their Comprehensive exam proposal (previously we expected them to prepare a proposal on a subject different from that of their PhD research). We believe that these changes will allow our doctoral candidates to (a) complete all exam requirements sooner than before and (b) focus on their research immediately after completing their required courses, and while preparing for their Comprehensive exam.

4.2 Organisation of teaching

4.2.3	The number of students in the teaching rooms is suitable for theoretical, practical and laboratory lessons.	3
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As indicated by the EEC, the small student-to-instructor ratio is one of the strengths of our programs of study since they allow more hands-on and personalized training, especially for undergraduate, Master's and PhD students who conduct research-based thesis projects.

Although we acknowledge that there are space restrictions in terms of classrooms and laboratory sizes, we consider them sufficient, as they meet all current training and educational goals of our programs of study. Nevertheless, an improvement to this situation is already under way because as mentioned in point 2.2.12 above, the Department has been allocated extra office and lab-space which is currently being renovated and expected to be ready within 2021. Moreover, as stated previously, the completion of the new Biological Sciences building will greatly expand these spaces and cover all future needs of the Department.

Comments of the EEC

The lower scores reflect an issue raised by the students about the comprehensive exam and teaching lab shortage that will be addressed by the new building.

Response of the HEI

We agree with the EEC that the new building will provide the Department with significantly more and better teaching and research laboratory facilities. Although we consider our current spaces sufficient for meeting all training and educational goals of our programs of study, we expect further improvement on this issue within 2021. This is because, as stated above, our Department has been allocated extra laboratory and office spaces by the University which are currently being renovated and some are expected to be available for use imminently and others later in this year.

We agree with the concerns about the comprehensive examination, and we have addressed them earlier in section 4.1.



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5. Teaching Staff

OVERALL COMMENTS OF THE EEC

Findings

The teaching load is heavy but not atypical for other university institutions.

Strengths

Engagement of the academic staff. The high ratio of staff to students provides a good training experience.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Course offerings are limited by student numbers, leading to limitations in fulfilling the program of study, which may improve if the department expands.

RESPONSE OF THE HEI

Findings

We agree with the findings of the EEC regarding our teaching load.

Strengths

The EEC accurately describes that a major asset of the Department is the high ratio of faculty-to-students which provides high quality and one-on-one training on research.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

As indicated by the EEC, the course offerings will continue to expand as new faculty are employed in the Department. In the meantime, we will continue to enrich our teaching pool through temporary employment of visiting faculty and/or special scientists for teaching.

DEFICIENCIES NOTED UNDER THE QUALITY INDICATORS

5.5	The ratio of special teaching staff to the total number of teaching staff is satisfactory.	N/A
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Although we did not get the chance to discuss this with the EEC, we state here that currently, there are 2 full-time special teaching staff members and 12 faculty members. Therefore, the total number of permanent teaching staff (excluding the small number of special scientists who teach on annual contracts) is 14.

5.6	The ratio of the number of subjects of the programme of study taught by teaching staff working fulltime and exclusively to the number of subjects taught by part-time teaching staff ensures the quality of the programme of study.	N/A
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We did not get the chance to discuss this with the EEC. We believe that we have a good ratio of the number of subjects taught by full-time teaching staff (faculty and special teaching staff) over those taught by part-time teaching staff (special scientist staff). For example, of the 13 courses taught by our Department's staff in the Spring semester of 2021 for the BSc programme in Biological Sciences, 11 were taught by full-time teaching staff and only 2 by part-time teaching staff. Similarly, out of the 15 postgraduate courses taught by Departmental staff during the Spring semester of 2021, only 2 were taught by part-time teaching staff.

Comments of the EEC

Course offerings are limited by student numbers, leading to limitations in fulfilling the program of study, which may improve as the department expands. N/A reflects lack of information provided.

Response of the HEI

We agree with the EEC comment that an increase in the number of our students and faculty members will increase the diversity and number of subjects taught, thereby improving our program of study. We expect to improve this situation by at least two actions already taken by the Department. First, in addition to our current level of advertising our programs of study to potential students, we allocated extra yearly Departmental funding exclusively devoted towards this (see section 1.3.3 above) with the aim of increasing the number of prospective students. Second, we expect to add one additional tenure-track faculty member within 2021 (provided that the ongoing hiring process, which is at an advanced stage, is officially approved by the relevant University bodies). Of course, in the coming years more faculty members will be recruited, as the new building becomes completed.

6. Research

OVERALL COMMENTS OF THE EEC

Findings

The research output is of good quality, especially in light of limited resources. The output could benefit from additional shared facilities and support. Research communication between staff members will benefit from being housed together in a new building. The need for strategic planning for future research directions was recognized, as well as the importance of reaching out to other departments at the university.

Strengths

Efficiency of resource usage and sharing expertise within the department.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Interdisciplinary interactions with other departments could be strengthened and might be supported by encouragement from the university (e.g. consideration of joint appointments with other departments, possibly housed in the new building).

Strategic planning for research directions should be a top priority and include consideration of evolving areas of international funding, as well as societal relevance of fundamental science.

To enhance the impact of equipment, the panel encourages increased technical support from the university to enable easier sharing. As mentioned in Section 3 of this evaluation, two technical staff to support research would improve training, research and funding opportunities; a staff member to look after general services, small equipment repair and a staff member to oversee training and usage of more sophisticated shared equipment.

RESPONSE OF THE HEI

Findings

We thank the EEC for their comments and agree with their findings. Despite the limitations imposed by the recent economic crisis and limited funding sources, our Department has managed to attract significant funding for its relatively small size based on the high quality of ongoing research.

As the EEC points out, the new building will facilitate many aspects of the Department both through infrastructure, as well as by facilitating more immediate interaction between the staff who are currently stationed in several on-campus locations. In the meantime, the University has allocated to our Department an extra common laboratory space, which will be shared by all faculty members, and which is currently being renovated and expected to be in use within 2021.

We acknowledge the need for a strategic planning for future research directions and we have devised such a plan (see sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 above).

We also value the importance of reaching out to other departments of the university. As a result, more than half of current faculty already collaborate with faculty in other departments of our university including the Medical School and the Departments of Physics, Chemistry, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Computer Science.

Strengths

The EEC outlines accurately the strengths of the Department and we agree with their assessment.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

The Department acknowledges and would certainly welcome the added value and benefits of joint faculty appointments, especially in interdisciplinary academia and research. However, current University of Cyprus (UCY) Laws and Regulations do not permit joint appointments. It should be noted however that more than half of current faculty collaborate with faculty in other departments of the UCY including: the Medical School, Departments of Physics, Chemistry, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Computer Science. To further foster synergies in multidisciplinary areas, the Department will identify potential local and international funding opportunities in multidisciplinary research areas that encompass our expertise, and the information will be highlighted during staff meetings. This will incentivize current and future faculty to collaborate with colleagues in other departments who already work in areas adjacent to biology.

The EEC paid particular attention to the lack of a strategic plan, which we acknowledge. We have addressed this by creating a strategic plan as indicated in other sections of this document (e.g. see sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 above).

We are in complete agreement with the EEC in that we could benefit from extra technical support. We addressed this in point 3.3 above.

DEFICIENCIES NOTED UNDER THE QUALITY INDICATORS

6. Research

6.1	The Department has a research policy formulated in line with its mission.	3
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The Department's research policy is to advance research across a broad range of disciplines complementary to areas investigated by current faculty members. We encourage undergraduate and graduate student participation, providing them with experiences working in state-of-the-art research environments.

6.3	The Department provides adequate facilities and equipment to cover the staff and students' research activities.	3
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The Department supports research activities of staff and students by providing each lab with funds for equipment, equipment maintenance, and consumables on an annual basis from its departmental budget allocation, as well as making provisions for common equipment use in common labs. While there is the need for more space to accommodate staff and students, the construction of the department's new building is ongoing, and in the meantime more lab space is being prepared to accommodate the existing shortage.

6.8	The external, non-governmental, funding of research activities of teaching staff is similar to other Departments in Cyprus and abroad.	3
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The Department has been successful in obtaining external and international funding, with grants obtained locally from non-governmental sources, such as the Leventis Foundation, and internationally from European Union in the form of ERC, Teaming, Twinning, and Marie Curie grants and fellowships. We believe these achievements compare well with those of other departments in Cyprus as well as those abroad.

Comments of the EEC

The research output reflects considerable value for money. Research output and funding are hindered by the economic situation.

Response of the HEI

We thank the EEC for this acknowledgement and agree with this assessment.

7. Resources

OVERALL COMMENTS OF THE EEC

Findings

Financial resources for laboratory consumables are provided by the university and this is appreciated and essential to research operations. Recent changes in support to PhD students are considered a challenge that is affecting the quality of training. Limitations on administrative and technical support are mentioned above.

Strengths

Support for consumables is important to maintain and helps the quality of output. The department attracts PhD students and contributes income to the university.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The limitations on distribution of income received from PhD training is threatening the efficacy of this training program to the extent that the time to degree completion is lengthened by the need for students without bursaries to work part-time. Some valuation of the departmental support in proportion to resources contributed to the university might be considered to improve this situation.

Suggestions for increased personnel resources (technical and administrative) have been made in the previous sections.

RESPONSE OF THE HEI

We agree with all the findings of the EEC. The financial resources that the University provides to the Department on a yearly basis (mainly for research consumables and equipment maintenance/purchasing) are both appreciated and essential. The limitations in providing financial support to PhD students are certainly a challenge that affects both the quality of training, as well as the ability of the Department to attract new PhD students. We also agree with the EEC about the need for additional technical and administrative personnel and for providing existing administrative staff the opportunity for promotion within the Department.

Strengths

The EEC outlines accurately the strengths of the Department and we agree with their assessment.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

The lack of capacity to provide financial support/stipend to PhD students is certainly a limitation for the Department and as a result, some PhD students may work part-time during their doctoral studies in order to support themselves, thereby contributing to the lengthening of the duration of their studies. Our response is as follows. First, the government-imposed University rules and legislature do not allow waiving of fees for all students including those studying for a PhD degree. Second, although up to 2016 our Department was using a large part of its income from postgraduate student fees to return all PhD students an amount approximately equal to their tuition fees (thereby alleviating their financial burden), it became financially impossible to

sustain this beyond 2016. This was mainly due to the combined effect of two things: (a) The financial crisis that hit Cyprus in 2013 prompted the University to substantially reduce the amount returned to Departments from their postgraduate tuition fees ‘income’, leaving them with only 30% to 40% of the original amount. This led to a significant reduction in our “own revenue” funds. (b) In 2016 our “own revenue” was further reduced and became a deficit due to additional research consumables needs that the University deducted from our “own revenue” funds. As a result, since 2016 the amount of ‘own revenue’ funds we can spend is minimal, and therefore not sufficient for financially supporting all of our PhD students. Nevertheless, the Department is already addressing this challenge in several ways including the following: (i) Several PhD students are currently being paid a salary from research grants of faculty members. For example, for Spring semester 2021, 32 out of 50 PhD students are financially supported by scholarships/research grants. (ii) Existing PhD students not having any funding are given priority for financial support as teaching assistants (TAs) to courses taught by our faculty (there are approximately 10 such positions allocated to our Department per semester). (iii) All PhD students are encouraged to apply for postgraduate scholarships issued by the University and several other bodies. Moreover, as mentioned above, the Department has already introduced new rules regarding the Comprehensive exam and the Research Proposal exam aimed at shortening the duration of PhD studies. Specifically, we introduced earlier deadlines for these exams and decided to allow PhD candidates to choose (in consultation with their research advisor) the subject of their Comprehensive exam proposal, which could be on the same subject as their PhD research (our previous departmental rules specified that the proposal should be on a subject different from their PhD research).

Regarding hiring additional technical and administrative personnel and providing existing administrative staff the opportunity for promotion within the Department, we have taken specific actions addressing all these as outlined in section 3.3 above.

DEFICIENCIES NOTED UNDER THE QUALITY INDICATORS

7. Resources

7.1	The Department has sufficient financial resources to support its functions, managed by the Institutional and Departmental bodies.	3
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The Department receives yearly funding from the University (provided to the University by the Government) which includes funds for purchasing laboratory consumables and equipment, as well as funds for the maintenance of laboratory equipment (such as microscopes, incubators, biosafety hoods, freezers, centrifuges, imaging systems, PCR machines, etc.). The Department was severely impacted by the financial crisis that hit the country in 2013. Governmental budgetary cuts and the lack of funding from the Cyprus Research and Innovation Foundation have greatly impinged on the Department’s functions, especially with regards to supporting the work of doctoral candidates, including the possibility to cover their tuition fees and/or stipends. Nevertheless, between 2018-2020 our Department has performed exceptionally well in securing funding for research (consumables, salaries, equipment): a total of approximately 17.5 million Euros were secured from European grants (11.3 million Euros) and grants from the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation (6.2 million Euros). These funds, in addition to the financial support by the University, have greatly facilitated the Department’s research functions, as well as the financial support of doctoral students (currently, 21 out of 50 PhD candidate stipends are supported by research grants).

7.4	The Department's budget is appropriate for its mission and adequate for the implementation of strategic planning.	3
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The Department has recently clearly stated its mission and has put forward its strategic planning, as detailed in Section 1. The Department's budget comes from Government funding distributed through the University, as well as external funding from National and International agencies. Faculty strive to acquire funding whenever competitive opportunities arise and have been very successful in securing funds the past few years. Existing faculty members and future hires are expected to compete for funding at the national and international levels. New hires will be assisted to identify funding opportunities in Cyprus and Europe through the mentorship program described in Section 1.3.2.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

We thank all the members of the EEC for their time and effort, both in thoroughly evaluating the Department, as well as for providing well thought-out guidance and useful recommendations for improvement. Their comments were well-received and appreciated.

Regarding the four recommendations of the EEC, our concluding remarks are the following.

1. In respect to developing a strategic recruitment plan for additional scientific personnel to further strengthen our research and teaching, the Department has developed such a plan (outlined in section 1.1.2 above), which will be assessed every five years. Briefly, future faculty hires over the next five years, will strengthen existing research areas, as it will cover the general research areas already represented in the Department (e.g., molecular and cell biology, developmental biology, genetics, epigenetics, cancer biology, infectious diseases, ecology and evolutionary biology, biodiversity, bioinformatics). Moreover, priority will be given to recruiting faculty with expertise in technological approaches/model systems which are complementary to those that already exist in the Department, so as to provide the opportunity for synergies between faculty members. Preference will be given to excellent research scientists advancing fields that can enrich our MSc and PhD programs of study.

2. Regarding the need for increased technical assistance, we took specific actions to address this (outlined in section 3.3 above) in following way. (a) We are already employing on a daily basis an experienced and extremely efficient University personnel for maintaining and repairing the small and general equipment of the Department. Although we are paying this person as overtime work from our “own revenue” funds and can sustain his payment for the foreseeable future, we have also asked the University to pay this person from central University funds. (b) We officially asked the University to grant our Department one laboratory technician position to oversee training and usage of more sophisticated shared equipment.

3. With reference to considering promotion possibilities for existing administrative staff to avoid losing them the Department took specific actions as stated in section 3.3 above. In short, although ‘straight-forward’ promotions within Departments are prohibited by the University’s rules and legislature, the Department asked the University to allocate to us two administrative positions of a higher status/salary: one position of “Secretarial Officer” and one for “University Officer A’ ”. If granted, this will create a possibility for intra-departmental promotions.

4. With regards to evaluating possibilities for increased financial support of the University to the Department, we have two comments. First, the University will increase the amount of money returned to Departments from postgraduate student fees payments from the current 40% to at least 50% thereby enhancing our “own revenue” funds. Second, as part of our strategic planning, we are currently exploring feasibility and viability of ‘self-funded’ post-graduate programs or micro-credentials. Although the teaching load of such programs must be over and above the minimum teaching load requirements of faculty of the University, 90% of the tuition fees are returned to the Department.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Associate Professor Pantelis Georgiades	Chairperson of the Department (term ended 13 April 2021), Coordinator of the Internal Evaluation Committee of the Department and Member of the Strategic Planning Committee of the Department	
Associate Professor Antonis Kirmizis	Chairperson of the Department (term started 14 April 2021), Coordinator of the Internal Evaluation Committee of the Department and Member of the Strategic Planning Committee of the Department	
Assistant Professor Chrysoula Pitsouli	Coordinator of the Departmental Postgraduate Studies Committee, Member of the Internal Evaluation Committee of the Department and Member of the Strategic Planning Committee of the Department	
Associate Professor Alexander Kirschel	Coordinator of the Departmental Undergraduate Studies Committee and Member of the Internal Evaluation Committee of the Department	
Dr. Dora C. Stylianou University Officer	University Officer and Member of the Internal Evaluation Committee of the Department and Member of the Strategic Planning Committee of the Department	
Assistant Professor Katerina Strati	Coordinator of the Strategic Planning Committee of the Department	



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Date: 28 April, 2021

APPENDIX I

- **SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**
- **INDICATIVE LIST OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS**
- **ADVERTISEMENT OF AVAILABLE POSITIONS FOR OUR PROGRAMS OF STUDY THROUGH UNICA**
- **ADVERTISING FLYER FOR OUR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS OF STUDY**

SUMMARY OF 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Department of Biological Sciences (DBS) is to advance research and teaching across a broad range of disciplines and at scales ranging from molecules and cells to ecosystems and biomes. We strive to foster a collaborative, engaging environment, where undergraduate and graduate students participate in cutting-edge research using state-of-the-art facilities in the laboratory and the field. We are committed to providing the experiences that will develop critical thinking in our graduates, to inspire them to make contributions towards the advancement of science, and the improvement of human health, the environment, and society.

This five-year strategic plan is in line with the Department mission statement and the priorities set forth by the UCY for the upcoming 5 years.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Positives	Negatives
<p data-bbox="387 371 507 400" style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High-caliber postgraduate students ▪ High quality academic faculty ▪ Linking research to teaching & low student-to-faculty ratio ▪ A wide range of academic expertise despite small size of Department ▪ Up-to-date course content ▪ All postgraduate courses taught in English to attract international students ▪ Contribution to the public understanding of science in Cyprus 	<p data-bbox="1090 371 1241 400" style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase of academic faculty number is dependent on the completion of the new Departmental building (at around 2023/24). Consequently, some courses are taught by 'Special Scientists' on short-term contracts ▪ Insufficient number of staff at technical and administrative positions ▪ Current UCY practice is that there is limited-to-none opportunity for promotion of administrative staff within the Department ▪ Increase in the number of Departmental elective courses is limited by (a) the relatively small pool of students from Cyprus, and (b) the UCY-imposed minimum student audience per course ▪ Limitation to reimburse tuition fees to Ph.D. students
<p data-bbox="89 1171 261 1200">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability for cutting-edge science (research and teaching) now and in the future ▪ Ability to attract highly competitive research funding ▪ Ability to attract high-caliber academic faculty ▪ Ability for further expansion and reinforcement of the Department once the new building is completed (today, there is about 60% coverage of organic posts) 	<p data-bbox="826 1171 922 1200">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction of government funding to UCY, and consequently to our Department ▪ Advertising of our postgraduate programs of study can benefit from further enhancement ▪ Valuable time consumed on bureaucratic procedures by both academic and administrative staff of the Department due to government-imposed and UCY-imposed procedures ▪ Limitation in the ability to attract high-caliber undergraduate students due to the government-imposed rules on undergraduate admissions

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ENHANCING COMPETITIVENESS AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AMONG THE BEST UNIVERSITIES IN THE WORLD

Section A. Excellence in teaching and learning

Improvement of the quality of teaching and connecting teaching to research

The DBS strives to achieve excellence in teaching and learning. Since the theory of Biology is intimately connected with biological research, we always try to improve the quality of teaching and interlink teaching to research. To this end, and in addition to the laboratory courses already offered (undergraduate lab courses, and the research theses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels), we plan to include more laboratory components in undergraduate and graduate courses.

Addition of a critical mass of new faculty members with different expertise

The DBS is relatively small, and currently has 12 active Faculty members with different expertise covering topics from organismal biology to molecular biology and biochemistry. To plan effectively the department's future development, we are in the process of developing a five-year department strategic plan, that will take into consideration potential changes of the undergraduate and postgraduate programs of study, the addition of attractive modern expertise, the strengthening of existing expertise, faculty retirement etc. In line with the strategic plan, as a medium-range realistic goal (given the UCY/government new Faculty position allocation policy), the Departmental Council will decide on the desired expertise of the 2 next Faculty hires. In addition, to enhance the teaching-research connection in the short-term, the Department will request the allocation of 1-2 Special Teaching Staff positions from the University. This will enable the addition of courses not covered by existing Faculty, and research laboratory components to existing and new undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Attraction of excellent undergraduate and postgraduate students

The DBS offers an undergraduate program in Biological Sciences, as well as 3 MSc programs and 2 PhD programs. To address the dynamic nature of Biology, the Department is constantly evaluating its programs of study and modifies the offered courses to include modern and attractive modules in line with the quality assurance requirements. Currently, the DBS is revising the departmental website to include the updated information of the programs of study, including structure of the program, course offerings, and rules. To increase the visibility of our programs of study, the DBS plans to advertise its offerings in local and international fora, and be actively involved in information/advertisement events organized by the community or the university.

Development of mechanisms for work experience and connection with programs of study

The DBS will include on its updated website the organizations and companies that could potentially hire its graduates. To successfully connect with our graduates, we will develop a plan in collaboration with the Graduate Office to list our graduates and identify their current positions. We will also enhance the offered course "Placement in Enterprises" for our undergraduate students and we will encourage them to take advantage of the opportunity.

Development of new hybrid or virtual programs of study

The DBS explores the possibility of developing a new self-funded postgraduate program of study, which may use the hybrid education model.

Section B. Developing Research and innovation

Improvement of Department capacity to recruit internationally excellent personnel

To maintain a high standard of quality in the hiring of faculty and other research staff we will advertise available positions through non-traditional avenues including online ads and social media accounts.

Attraction of excellent researchers

The DBS will strive to reduce time between application deadline and final decision to increase chance of uptake by successful candidates. Furthermore, we will provide opportunities for interviewing candidates to meet the department staff (online and on-site opportunities).

The DBS will prioritize hiring of excellent researchers who will strengthen existing areas of research by creating opportunity for synergies and complementarity. The department will advertise available positions through the department social media accounts, online advertising.

Reinforcement, support, and sustainable support of research

To enhance career development, we will establish a mentorship program to support and guide new hires. We will strengthen support of existing students (undergraduate and graduate) and postdocs by inviting participation of their representatives in the departmental council to discuss issues faced and potential corrective measures.

Connection of research activity with innovation productivity, market and societal needs

To support experimental research endeavors we will improve management of existing research infrastructure, e.g. we will update management of online inventory of common use equipment.

To promote connections with the clinic and industry, we will also invite speakers from industry or clinical practice to give talks in departmental seminar series. We will highlight graduates and collaborators working in industry to raise awareness between department members.

Foundation of new research units

The department will support the founding of new research labs by incoming faculty.

Acceleration of building, information technology, and laboratory development

We will continue to monitor progress on the new building for DBS currently under construction.

Section C. Internationalization

Attraction and effective support of international students in existing or new programs of study

The DBS will (a) maintain the participation of international students through the Erasmus+ student mobility program of existing curricula of the Department, and (b) maintain and increase the number of international students who enroll in our postgraduate programs, which are all taught in English since 2018, through their efficient advertising.

Development of international collaborations to enhance the mobility of students and graduates

The DBS will contact Universities from Europe and the Middle East for discussing possibilities for developing joint education activities and potential joint research initiatives.

Development of international collaborations to enhance the mobility of academic staff and researchers

The DBS will contact Universities from Europe and the Middle East for discussing possibilities for research collaborations in order to enhance the mobility of academic staff and researchers. In addition, we will encourage Faculty members to utilize the Erasmus+ mobility opportunities for academic staff.

Development of international collaborations to enhance the mobility of administrative staff

The DBS will contact Universities from Europe and the Middle East to discuss possibilities for teaching collaborations thereby facilitating the mobility of administrative staff. In addition, we will encourage Administrative staff to utilize the Erasmus+ staff mobility opportunities.

Development of strategic international collaborations for the promotion of research and teaching (organization of summer schools, development of international institutes in the University of Cyprus, etc.),
The DBS will contact Universities from Europe and the Middle East for discussing possibilities for developing joint educational activities with the aim of being implemented at the University of Cyprus. We will also actively engage in the YUFE consortium.

Development of international activities

The DBS will contact Universities from Europe and the Middle East for discussing possibilities for developing joint Departmental education activities, potential joint Departmental research initiatives and research collaborations between faculty members.

To increase the participation of University of Cyprus students in international individual or group competitions, we will identify such competitions and actively encourage students of our Department to participate. These may include (a) international competitions for writing the best essay about a scientific topic or (b) submitting posters or oral presentations at international scientific conferences, which award prizes for the best posters and/or presentations.

Section D. Liaison with alumni, industry and other external organizations

Enhancement of liaison with alumni, the industry and other external organizations

The DBS will continue to foster and enhance its collaborations with universities, research centers and/or hospitals through funded research projects.

Optimal use of intellectual property (cooperatives, spin-offs and start-ups)

To enhance the process of forming new strategic collaborations with companies, the DBS will showcase the expertise of departmental faculty members who can provide consultation services for R&D.

Development of lifelong learning, vocational education and training programs and provision of consulting services in the public and private sector

The DBS will continue to provide consultation services to the public and the private sector and will contribute through its expertise to the lifelong learning programs offered by the University. To further enhance the liaison between the Department and external organizations and to better train our undergraduate students for future work, the Department offers course BIO 444 " Student placement in Other Institutions " which concerns the placement of students in companies and organizations.

Development of synergies with joint participation of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot students, graduates and academics where it is institutionally allowed

To strengthen the synergy between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot community, our Department will advertise our postgraduate programs of study in English, to attract more Turkish Cypriot students.

Section E: Strengthening employability of students and graduates

Continuous upgrade of existing and offer of new programs of study - connecting them to the requirements of the international market and the society of knowledge

To upgrade the DBS's offered programs of study and to enhance their connection to the requirements of the international and local market, we will add laboratory components in existing courses (undergraduate and postgraduate) and we will also encourage our undergraduate students to take the "Practical Exercise" to enhance their practical skills. We will also encourage our students to take the "Student Placement in Other

Institutions” course, that will enable them to advance their skills, directly connect with the job market and enhance their employability.

Improve the verbal, critical thinking and communication skills, and the professional networking of our students and graduates

To strengthen the employability of our students and graduates, we will identify the skills required in the job market for biological science graduates and we will ensure that our students will have the opportunity to acquire them during their studies. To provide soft-skill training to the undergraduate and postgraduate students necessary for the job market (i.e. professional email writing, CV preparation, oral and written presentations, computer skills), the DBS will organize specific seminars. Speakers/trainers of these seminars can be members of the Faculty and Special Teaching Staff, as well as colleagues from the Career Office. To enable our graduates to work in education, we will look into the possibility of offering a course or series of seminars on biology teaching in collaboration with the Department of Education. To enhance student and graduate networking, we will invite speakers that are actively engaging in biology (e.g. Biology-relevant NGO members, industry, educators, ministry of education) for our regular open-to-the-public seminar series. Finally, to improve our students and graduates English language skills, we will try to increase the number of courses offered in English in our undergraduate curriculum (of note: all postgraduate programs of the department are offered in English).

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS

Section A: Development of new and reinforcement of existing sources of income

Attraction of donations, sponsorships and other external funding

The DBS will generate list of awards, which could be funded by external grants. We will contact companies and other potential donors to solicit interest.

Attraction of investments through strategic partnerships with local and international companies and organizations

To promote strategic partnerships, we will identify infrastructures/equipment of high priority and stakeholders with common interest. We will seek help from University offices (e.g. Research Office) to draft facilitate signing of collaborative agreements.

Economic exploitation of intellectual property rights (copyright and patents)

To reinforce the ability of researchers to take advantage of their IP rights, we will liaise with the IPC and Research Office at UCY to publicize training and other support opportunities.

Expansion of the educational activities / services of UCY

To further the educational endeavors of the DBS, we will explore the financial viability of new self-funded programs or micro-credentials.

Section B. Effective management of resources and reserves

Creation and monitoring the implementation of an optimal resource utilization plan

For the effective management of resources and reserves, the DBS will continue to prepare and submit to the central University authorities an annual budget based on ongoing and planned actions. This will ensure that the Department can create and follow a strategic plan of action in effectively managing its resources and reserves.

Development to Green and "Smart" University

To further contribute to the management of University resources, as well as the goal of becoming a Green University, the DBS also plans to use more extensively the available electronic/online platforms and tools, thus, reducing the use of printed material.

Section C. Model of effective management

Enhancement of efficiency

To enhance its productivity the DBS plans to redesign existing administrative processes of the Department in order to simplify them. Furthermore, several of these processes will be automated or will require less manhours through the use of available of electronic/online platforms and tools. This will further enhance the services provided to students and faculty.

Enhancement of flexibility in human resource management

The DBS plans to adhere to the new Job Descriptions of the administrative personnel, as soon as these are drafted and approved by the central University authorities.

Section D. Optimizing management

Reorganization of the administrative structure for optimal utilization of staff in the provision of services to the University Community

To optimize management structure, the department will apply for increase of administrative support. Revised workflows and assigned duties as necessary to increase efficiency.

Section E. Cultivating workplace culture

Improvement of human resource management systems and strengthening meritocracy and good governance, as well as gender equality in all decision-making committees, all administrative and academic levels

The DBS will strive for gender balance and diversity (in terms of country representation) in the nomination of committees for hiring and evaluations. We will include statements regarding gender balance and diversity in all hiring calls. We will publicize training seminars by HR office and encourage participation of faculty and staff.

Continuous training and professional development of the staff

We will encourage uptake of further training for staff (through participation in workshops and seminars) and faculty (through participation in conferences, seminars, workshops, or conferences).

Development of accountability mechanisms and systems for providing effective incentives

We will encourage communication during scheduled evaluations and request positions for promotion of administrative staff to offer further incentives.

Enhancement of synergies between faculty members from different Departments and Schools

To foster synergies in multidisciplinary areas, the DBS will identify potential local and international funding opportunities in multidisciplinary research areas that encompass our expertise, and the information will be

highlighted during staff meetings. This will incentivize current and future faculty to collaborate with colleagues in other departments who already work in areas adjacent to biology. We will invite faculty members from the department to present their multidisciplinary work, or members from other departments to present work adjacent to biology.

Utilization of telework as an alternative form of work

The DBS will continue implementation according to UCY rules.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: BEARER OF CULTURE AND SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION

Section A. Enhancing cultural contribution

Development of a long-term cultural strategy for strengthening existing and developing new cultural actions

The DBS will engage the public with the impact of modern Biology (the study of Life) on local culture (the behaviors, beliefs, values that Cypriots accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next). Areas of cultural impact will include evolution, *in vitro* fertilization, nature versus nurture, stem cells, ageing and pandemics. This will be done through contact of members of the DBS with the public through actions including open public lectures, traditional and social media using layman's language.

Section B. Substantial intervention in society and the state

Promotion of scientific culture through actions of scientific communication and public participation

The DBS will publicize activities of members of the Department who participate in the following: (a) Open public lectures, writing articles in print and electronic media and social media. The aim is to communicate to the public the latest advances in various areas of modern Biology in which members of the Department are actively engaged through research. (b) Visits to and from schools in Cyprus. The aim here is to engage our future generation with the latest advances in various areas of modern Biology.

Society consultation mechanism and lifelong learning programs

The DBS aims to contribute to lifelong learning programs by organizing seminars open to the public that are given by members of the Department with the aim of educating the adult public about specific topics of modern Biology.

Optimal utilization of expertise of academic and administrative staff for the benefit of society and the state

The DBS will publicize the names and expertise of members of the Department on the departmental website and social media, as well as give this information to the Rector's Council. The aim here is to be available for any possible contributions to sections of society and the state that may need guidance from our expertise.

Linking research to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The aim is to promote the Department's research that is relevant to the SDGs. The latter are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all humans by addressing the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. We will communicate our research in relevant Biology areas (such as ecology and biodiversity) through engagement of members of the DBS in the local press, television and digital media.

INDICATIVE LIST OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

AUSTRIA

- University of Graz, Austria

CANADA

- Department of Bioengineering, McGill University, Canada
- University of Toronto, Canada

CYPRUS

- 'Enalia Physis' Environmental Research Centre, Cyprus
- Agricultural Research Institute, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, Cyprus
- Birdlife Cyprus, Cyprus
- Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics, Cyprus
- Department of Fisheries and Marine Research, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, Cyprus
- Department of Life Sciences, European University Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
- European University Cyprus, Cyprus
- Game and Wildlife Service, Ministry of Interior, Cyprus
- Karaiskakio Foundation, Cyprus
- Marine and Environmental Research (MER), Cyprus
- Oceanography Center, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

FRANCE

- Exelixis Lab, Heidelberg Institute for Theoretical Studies (HITS), Heidelberg, Germany
- Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), France
- École Supérieure De Physique Et De Chimie Industrielles De La Ville De Paris (Espci), France
- IGBMC, France
- Institute of Analytical Sciences and Physico-Chemistry for Environment and Materials, Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, Pau, France

GERMANY

- DKFZ, Germany
- EMBL Heidelberg, Germany
- Exelixis Lab, Heidelberg Institute for Theoretical Studies (HITS), Heidelberg, Germany
- Helmholtz Zentrum Munich, Germany
- Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Faculty of Biology, Germany
- Max Planck Institute, Germany
- Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde, Stuttgart, Germany
- University of Heidelberg, Germany

- University of Munich, Germany

GREECE

- University of Crete, Medical School, Greece (Quoted TWICE)
- Aristotle University Thessaloniki (School of Informatics/ School of Biology) Greece
- CERTH, Greece
- Department of Agriculture, Crop Production and Rural Environment, Univ. of Thessaly, Volos, Greece
- Department of Biology & Natural History Museum of Crete, University of Crete, Irakleio, Greece
- Department of Biology & Zoological Museum, University of Athens, Athens, Greece
- Department of Forest Ecology, Hellenic Agricultural Organisation 'Demeter', Athens, Greece
- Department of Marine Science, University of Aegean, Mytilini, Greece
- Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics, Democritus University of Thrace, Alexnadroupolis, Greece
- Institute of Marine Biological Resources and Inland Waters, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Anavyssos, Greece
- University of Athens, Greece
- University of Crete, Greece
- University of Thessaly, Department of Biochemistry & Biotechnology, Greece

IRELAND

University College Cork & APC Microbiome, Ireland

HUNGARY

- Department of Ecology, University of Veterinary Medicine, Budapest, Hungary

ISRAEL

- Department of Zoology, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

ITALY

- Department of Biology, Zoology and Anthropology Unit, Pisa, Italy
- Dipartimento di Biologia, Università degli Studi di Pisa, Pisa, Italy
- Istituto di Ricerca sugli Ecosistemi Terrestri, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Florence, Italy
- Museo di Storia Naturale, Sezione di Zoologia "La Specola", Florence, Italy
- University of Padova, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Italy

KOREA

- Pohang University of Science and Technology, Korea

NETHERLANDS

- Radboud University, Netherlands

QATAR

- College of Medicine, Member of QU Health, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar

RUSSIA

- Russian Academy of Sciences, Academy of Science: Zoological Institute of the Russian academy of Science, Botanical institute of the Russian Academy of Science, The Caspian Institute of Biological resources of Dagestan Scientific Centre), Russia

SPAIN

- Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Instituto de Productos Naturales y Agrobiología - IPNA, Estación Biológica de Doñana – EBD, Spain
- Institute of Marine Science (ICM-CSIC), Passeig Marítim de la Barceloneta, Barcelona, Spain

SWITZERLAND

- École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland

TURKEY

- Ege University, Turkey

UNITED KINGDOM

- Department of Biostatistics, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK
- Institute of Cancer Research London, UK
- Kings College London, UK
- School of Biological and Marine Sciences, University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK
- The Natural History Museum (NHM), UK
- University of Warwick, Department of Life Sciences, UK

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- Baylor College of Medicine, USA
- Huntsman Cancer Institute, University of Utah, USA
- The Rockefeller University, USA
- UC Berkeley, USA
- UC San Francisco, USA
- University of Southern California, USA



University of Cyprus | Announcements

03 March 2021 | From our Members

We are glad to share the new announcements of the UNICA member, [University of Cyprus](#).

The [KIOS Research and Innovation Center of Excellence](#) announces **10 full-time PhD Student Scholarships**. The selected students will be enrolled in either the Electrical Engineering or the Computer Engineering PhD program of the University of Cyprus.

Apply before **Friday, 12 March 2021 at 5 pm**.

Do you want to know more? Click [here](#).

The [NIREAS International Water Research Center](#) in collaboration with the KIOS Research and Innovation Center of Excellence at the University of Cyprus announce **1 research position for full-time employment**.

Apply before **Friday, 26th March 2021, at 5 pm**.

Find more information [here](#).

The [Department of Biological Sciences](#) of the University of Cyprus proposes three interesting graduate degrees in Biomedical Science (MSc), Biodiversity & Ecology (PhD and MSc), Molecular Biology & Biomedicine (MSc).

More information [here](#).



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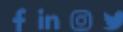
Address

UNICA a.i.s.b.l. c/o University Foundation
Rue d'Egmont 11
1000 Brussels, BELGIUM

Contact

Tel: +32 (0)2 514 79 00
Tel: +32 (0)2 514 78 00
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University of Cyprus
Department of Biological
Sciences

GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN THE LIFE SCIENCES



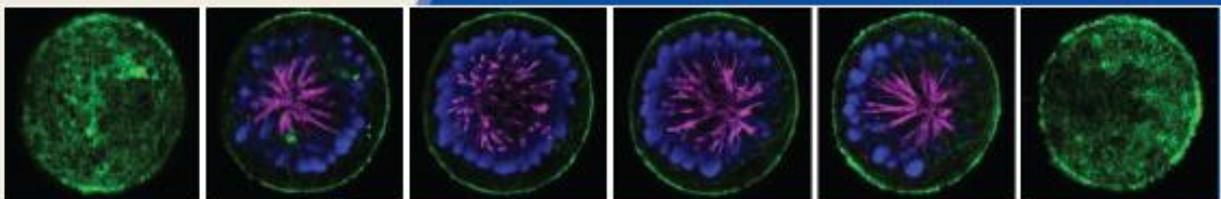
Research groups working in diverse areas
of Biology including:

- *Cell and Molecular Biology*
- *Ecology and Biodiversity*
- *Cancer Biology*
- *Bioinformatics*
- *Mechanobiology*
- *Genetics and Epigenetics*
- *Developmental Biology and Embryology*
- *Stem Cell Biology*
- *Host-Pathogen Interactions and Virology*
- *Evolutionary Biology*

Graduate Degrees in:

- (a) *Biomedical Sciences (PhD and MSc)*
- (b) *Biodiversity & Ecology (PhD and MSc)*
- (c) *Molecular Biology & Biomedicine (MSc)*

- PhD and MSc scholarships available
- All graduate programs of study taught in English
- Outstanding training through both research and course work
- Teaching experience through paid teaching assistant appointments
- Cutting-edge research facilities and teaching laboratories
- World-class research groups publishing in prestigious journals
- Excellent career prospects with graduates employed at top institutions in both Europe and USA
- Exceptional track record of funding, including highly-competitive international grants
- Modern campus with state-of-the-art library and sports facilities, coffee shops, restaurants, bars and stores
- Excellent quality of life in Nicosia, Cyprus and beautiful weather all year round



For more info visit : <https://www.ucy.ac.cy/biol/en/academicprogramms/postgraduate>