

Doc. 300.3.2
Date: 07/04/2021

Higher Education Institution's Response (Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Cyprus University of Technology
- **Town:** Limassol
- **School/Faculty:** Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts
- **Department:** Department of Multimedia and Graphic Arts
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

Programme 1

In Greek:

Πτυχίο Πολυμέσων και Γραφικών Τεχνών, 240
ECTS, Cycle 1

In English:

Bachelor in Multimedia and Graphic Arts, 240
ECTS, Cycle 1

Programme 2

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών του
Τμήματος Πολυμέσων και Γραφικών Τεχνών, 240
ECTS, Cycle 3

In English:

PhD in Multimedia and Graphic Arts, 240
ECTS, Cycle 3

Programme 3

In Greek:

Programme Name



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 compliance in section 1. and sub-areas (1.1,1.2, 1.3) with quality indicators/criteria	All marks are complaint (4-5)
“Students are well involved in the departmental development.”	Thank you for the positive comments.
“The students can choose between the two pathways “Multimedia” and “Graphic Arts”. There is a number of joint courses, but only very few projects in which students of the two pathways would cooperate. A structure that allows the students to collaborate across the pathways would help them to interact and teamwork together. This was also expressed as a wish in the meeting with students and graduates.”	<p>Thank you for the comment. Yes indeed, there are several joint courses (especially electives in Group C) in which the students from the two pathways get to work together. The committee refers to the specific projects that are completed within these joined courses. To explain, within our problem/project-based learning approach, students often self-select their teams. In this case, students from the same pathway tend to group together, since they already know each-other better.</p> <p>In one of our most recently introduced electives (MGA 498 Project Based Teamwork Practices) of Group C, students from both pathways are working together to realize a single common project. This requires constant collaboration among the team members, often across disciplines/pathways. The course has produced very good dynamics and results.</p> <p>Other instructors of Group C courses have also adopted this idea (e.g., MGA240) or aim to adopt it (e.g., MGA320). Also, in most courses project-briefs are designed in ways that encourage cross-pathway collaboration.</p> <p>We would suggest that this idea (coming directly from the students) is already in place to some extent and we will aim to make it more apparent in the immediate future. The instructors will also try to encourage the</p>

	students to self-select mixed-pathways teams whenever an opportunity exists (e.g., courses for both pathways and Group C electives).
“1.2.1–1.2.4 The mechanisms behind could hardly be assessed in the format of the online site visit, however the interaction with and impact on society is convincing. 1.2.4 There is good communication and strong bonds between the graduates and the department’s academic staff. This seems to happen on an interpersonal level and intermediately.”	Thank you for the positive comments.
“1.3.3 Regarding Cyprus-based students, strategies and procedures to attract high-level students are well developed on all levels: BA, MA and PhD. Those activities could be improved towards the recruitment of international students for the BA program. 1.3.4 The funding processes and budgets are clear and transparent.”	Thank you for the positive comments. Recruitment of international students for the BA program is a nice suggestion by the committee. We understand that this idea is beyond the encouragement of a mobility program, which is already in place through Erasmus exchanges. The reality is that Greek language proficiency is an issue in the case of admission of international students. The university should consider this idea and all related issues (recruitment, language induction courses) at a strategic planning level. The Department would be happy to adopt such a University planning.
The application papers have been detailed and informative. The quality of the teaching staff described in the application has been proven in the online meetings. The mission, strategy planning and development process including SWOT analysis are transparent and well implemented.	Thank you for the positive comments.
<i>Findings</i> The application papers have been detailed and informative. The quality of the teaching staff described in the application has been proven in the online meetings.	Thank you for the positive comments.

The mission, strategy planning and development process including SWOT analysis are transparent and well implemented.

Strengths

Self-organization is well-structured, clear and transparent.
Offering studies from undergrad over postgrad to doctoral.
The “Makers Space” is a clear benefit for staff, students, research and social life in the department.
Different and extensive publications and awards have been achieved by staff and students.
Extensive sufficient extracurricular activities.
Students and graduates were enthusiastic towards the department, staff and the teaching.
Connections between students and tutors is close and personal.
The students get industry insights and contacts via their tutors and the projects offered.
The academic staff appeared very well informed and form an effective team together.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

For multimedia and graphic arts, there should be MA program opportunities that bridge between the Bachelor and the doctoral studies.
More attention could be given to the recruitment on attracting international high-level students.

Thank you for the positive comments.

Yes indeed, the Department is lacking MA program opportunities. The strategic plan of the Department includes the offering of new MA programs which will not only bridge the gap between Bachelor and Doctoral studies, but will also contribute to the Department’s own income, therefore supporting its further development, and will allow students to gain in-depth knowledge in specific domains of Multimedia and Graphic Arts.

With respect to attracting international high-level students:

	<p>(i) At BA level, we address the comment in the lines right above</p> <p>(ii) At PhD level the Department already has a mechanism in place that is expected to increase the number of international PhD students in the next few years. First, we have already attracted some international high-level PhD students via the Horizon 2020 European Training Network (e.g., project POEM). Second, we have recently set up the CYENS Center of Excellence (our University being a shareholder of CYENS and members of the Department being founding members) which now offers PhD scholarships to international high-level students. These PhD students will be registered with the Department and supervised by Department academics. The initiative is expected to bring new international high-level PhD students in the Department in the next few years. The Department will continue to pursue initiatives and strategies aimed at attracting international high-level students.</p>
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2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

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

Overall compliance in section 2. and sub-areas (2.1, 2.2) with quality indicators/criteria	All marks are complaint (4-5) apart from “2.2.12.4 Technological infrastructure” which has received a score of “3” and is addressed further below.
2.1.1–2.1.2 The department uses feedback and data coming from their industry partners to ensure the quality of learning and teaching. An exit survey is conducted with graduates. There are also alumni survey course evaluations. Further, the	Thank you for the positive comments.

<p>academics rely on continuous feedback in all courses.</p>	
<p>2.2.13 The department ensures appropriate facilities within its opportunities. However, there are issues with the lack of a central campus and the facilities the department can use. It might be in the interest of the university to look into centralizing its facilities. The establishment of social meeting points, such as a cafeteria close to the Makers Space, would foster a center for student life. During the evaluation, students, graduates and staff have repeatedly addressed the issue, and suggested a cafeteria as a possible solution.</p>	<p>Thank you for the positive comments. The issue of premises is a long standing one for the Department. We have invested a huge amount of effort over the past 10 years to make our teaching labs, research labs, and recently the Makerspace viable for teaching, learning, researching. These premises are unfortunately on rent and long-term planning is missing. Bringing physical resources together and centralizing its facilities in a campus would benefit the Department enormously; indeed, we are missing social meeting points for students and faculty members, such as a cafeteria. The university should seriously consider the support of the Department towards bringing its physical resources together in owned premises designed to serve the needs of the current program of studies as well the new program of studies to be pushed for approval.</p>
<p>2.2.12.4 Some of the technical equipment meets high standards, however the computers (iMacs and PCs) as seen on the visual documentation and as pointed out by students are not anymore meeting current industry standards, and therefore should be renewed or updated.</p>	<p>Thank you for the positive comments. The department requests an upgrade of technical equipment (typical Macs and PCs) every 4-5 years, through the IT department of the University and its central budget (budget 412 for hardware and 332 for software). We have very recently upgraded two teaching labs, namely 20 high-standards PCs in the Multimedia Lab and 30 high-standards Macs in the Graphic Design Lab. Unfortunately, the upgrades concurred with the pandemic situation and the students did not have the opportunity to work extensively in these upgraded labs – especially those students from other cities who could not commute to Limassol during the pandemic. Although we work in a very rapidly changing field with quick changes in the technological requirements, we believe that the issue presented here is, in fact, addressed for the next 4-5 years and will continue to be well-addressed via the Department’s request for upgrades every 4-5 years. However, the University should also consider</p>

	<p>policies that allow the students to purchase and upgrade their own laptops. Unfortunately, during the pandemic many students had to rely on their own laptops for completing course assignments which were very demanding in computer power (e.g. rendering in 3D modeling courses). 2.2.12.4 “Technological infrastructure” has received a score of “3” but we believe that we are fully compliant as described above. Furthermore, the department will examine the possibility of purchasing cloud-based rendering farm solutions for further supporting the relevant needs.</p>
<p>The overall impression is compliant.</p> <p><i>Findings</i></p> <p>The overall impression is compliant.</p> <p><i>Strengths</i></p> <p>Great staff engagement towards students and teaching. A range of activities such as inviting relevant designers for talks and participating in international competitions. Staff is committed to their subject areas and covers a great bandwidth of specializations. Collaboration of different departments sharing labs and facilities. Maker Space as an area of learning and teaching, research and experimentation in which students of all levels and staff interact with each other.</p>	<p>Thank you for the positive comments.</p>
<p><i>Areas of improvement and recommendations</i></p> <p>Installation of a social meeting point such as a cafeteria. The establishment of a more cohesive and integrated campus in the future.</p>	<p>Already discussed above. We agree with the committee and we expect relevant actions from the University.</p>

3. Administration

Overall compliance in section 3. with quality indicators/criteria	All marks are complaint (4-5)
Even if the overall impression of the administration is positive, the academic struggle with the heavy administrative workload. A better support through administrative staff who take away some of the working load would allow them to focus more on teaching, research and the departments' development.	Thank you for the positive comments. We agree with the comment; the University must re-consider the level of bureaucracy it imposes on faculty members and work to simplify processes and reduce the administration load. We are aware and thankful that the new leadership of the University is working in this direction.
<i>Findings</i> The administration team was found efficient and functional.	
<i>Areas of improvement and recommendations</i> More support for the academics through administrative staff. The academics' administrative workload should be lowered to allow them to focus more on teaching, research and the departments' development	Thank you for the comments (see response above)

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

<p>Overall compliance in section 4. and all sub-areas (4.1, 4.2) with quality indicators/criteria</p>	<p>All marks are complaint (4-5) apart from 4.2.1 which has received a score of “3” and is addressed below.</p>
<p>4.1.1.–4.1.2 There are different systems such as an exit survey with graduates, alumni survey course evaluations, and continuous feedback in all courses.</p>	<p>Thank you for the positive comments.</p>
<p><i>Findings</i></p> <p>In the current procedure, the candidates’ qualifications towards art and design are not assessed for the BA program before they enter their studies.</p> <p><i>Areas of improvement and recommendations</i></p> <p>Introduce qualifying entry exams for art and design Bachelor candidates to ensure attracting the most qualified applicants in the subject area.</p>	<p>Thank you for the comment.</p> <p>This issue needs very careful consideration by the Department. It is an issue that the Department has discussed extensively in the past to eventually conclude that the current admission framework is the most fair and appropriate one. We elaborate below.</p> <p>The Pancyprian Exams (state exams) are held annually by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus with the aim of allocating positions to candidates in the Public Universities of Cyprus and Greece. All Cypriot students have access to Pancyprian exams which ensure fair opportunities, including opportunities for Technical School graduates, Evening High School graduates, students in special categories.</p> <p>A yearly analysis of students' interest in admission to the Department shows that more than 350 candidates choose the department as their first choice, competing for 40 slots (20 in each pathway). The number is much larger (1000+ candidates) if we consider those who select the Department as a 2nd or 3rd choice. As a result, we get very competent students, out of a very large pool of candidates who have consciously selected the department as their 1st choice. Any change in this</p>

framework, can hinder the quality of candidates we get, rather than improve it. To elaborate further:

- 1) If design courses (graphic arts, fine arts) become compulsory for admission, a large pool of candidates will be excluded from the competition. Graphic arts and Fine arts are elective courses in high school and a 15yrs old student might not consider taking these courses until s/he is 18yrs considering further studies in the design field.
- 2) If a graphic arts or fine arts exams are introduced outside the Pancyprian Exams (like it is done by the Fine Arts program but for a much smaller number of candidates), then more than 1300 candidates should be allowed to compete in the case of our Department. It would be impossible for the Department or the University to handle such a process whilst ensuring transparency, fairness, consistency between evaluators etc.
- 3) If a portfolio process is adopted for admission (or any kind of screening for short listing), this would lead to a highly unfair admission process. Not all students would have the opportunity to develop a portfolio during their K-12 education, as this is not part of the K-12 education curriculum or goals. A portfolio would therefore become the privilege of a few candidates who benefit from private courses as extracurricular activities.

Most importantly, since 2007 when this Department/Programme started, our students have succeeded in their studies and in their future careers with 85% of our graduates getting their 1st job within months upon graduation (based on the Alumni survey). This fact indirectly implies that the admission framework has not jeopardized the quality of our students and graduates in any way. Moreover, our data shows that approximately 30% of our students enter the department with exams on Graphic Arts (~20%), Fine Arts (~7%), Design & Technology or Architecture (~4%). That is 1/3 of our students self-select to be examined in those courses, while the framework also gives an opportunity for others to

	<p>also compete in case design/art courses were not amongst their electives in high school.</p> <p>Over the years, the Department has considered the above mentioned very seriously, driven by concerns similar to those presented by the committee. As part of these discussions the department, since 2014, enriched the program with foundation units in Yr 1 courses, foundation workshop/seminars organized by the Department, and access to video tutorial resources such as LinkedIn Learning for self-paced development. We now have evidence that any differences in students' background at admission stage, diminish by the end of year 1 of their studies. We have not realized a relationship between entry-exams and student performance/success in the program.</p> <p>Overall, although we recognize the importance of assessing the candidates' qualifications towards art and design before entering the BA program, we believe that the current admission framework is one that gives fair opportunities to all students and does indeed result to a pool of candidates that are very capable of succeeding in the program of studies and their future careers.</p> <p>The Department will aim to continue to monitor the relationship between entry-exams and student performance/success in the program. If a significant correlation is ever identified and established, the Department will re-reconsider the entry framework. As of today, the Department wishes to continue the current admission framework (described at https://www.cut.ac.cy/faculties/aac/mga/degrees/undergraduate-programmes/)</p>
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <p>There is good communication and a respectful as well as close relationship between staff and students.</p>	<p>Thank you for the positive comments.</p>

5. Teaching Staff

Overall compliance in section 5. with quality indicators/criteria	All marks are complaint (4-5)
<p><i>Findings</i></p> <p>The committee has gained a very positive overall impression of the department and the academic staff.</p> <p><i>Strengths</i></p> <p>The academics are often holding PhDs, while many of them evidence broad international academic and professional experience. A great number of technical staff members demonstrate to be highly qualified in their subject area, and are also holding higher academic degrees.</p> <p><i>Areas of improvement and recommendations</i> n/a</p>	Thank you for the positive comments.

6. Research

Overall compliance in section 6. with quality indicators/criteria	All marks are complaint (all 4s)
<p><i>Findings</i></p> <p>The academic staff engages in research, and carries their findings into their teaching. Particularly on the PhD program, there are well established methods to equip students with research skills, include them into the staff's research, and foster research-driven student mobility.</p>	Thank you for the positive comments.

<p><i>Strengths</i> Specific staff members evidence strong research profiles. There is a strong research output by staff and PhD students.</p> <p><i>Areas of improvement and recommendations</i> n/a</p>	

7. Resources

<p>Overall compliance in section 7. with quality indicators/criteria</p>	<p>All marks are complaint (all 4s)</p>
<p><i>Findings</i></p> <p>The impression the Evaluation Committee could gain through the online visit is overall compliant and positive.</p> <p><i>Strengths</i> n/a</p> <p><i>Areas of improvement and recommendations</i> n/a</p>	<p>Thank you for the positive comments.</p>

B. Conclusions and final remarks

<p>The committee agrees that the department is sufficiently equipped. The structures appear satisfying, the staff is qualified and committed.</p> <p>The department ensures appropriate facilities within its opportunities. However, the spread-out campus without a central meeting place is partly demanding for students and staff. It might be in the interest of the university to look into centralizing its facilities, or establishing social meeting points to foster a centre for student life, such as a cafeteria close to the Makers Space. During the evaluation, it has been repeatedly addressed by students and graduates, who suggested a cafeteria as a possible solution.</p> <p>The committee agrees the department is fully compliant.</p>	<p>The Department of Multimedia and Graphic Arts and all the faculty-participants in this evaluation highly appreciate both the professionalism of the members of the external committee and the positive and constructive spirit, which prevailed throughout the day.</p> <p>The Department welcomes the positive comments made by the Committee in the report and responds to the recommendations of the Committee for further improvement.</p> <p>The Department agrees with the final remarks about centralized facilities and hopes that the University will act accordingly.</p> <p>Overall, we are very glad that the quality and commitment of the Department became apparent to the evaluation committee.</p>
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Andri Ioannou	Associate Professor, Department Chair	
Evripides Zantides	BA Program Coordinator (Graphic Arts Pathway)	
Doros Polydorou	BA Program Coordinator (Multimedia Pathway)	
Marinos Koutsomichalis	PhD Program Coordinator	
FullName	Position	
FullName	Position	

Date: 13/04/2021