Doc. 300.3.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

Date: 7/6/2024

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  University of Limassol
- **Town: Limassol**
- **School/Faculty: Social Sciences and Humanities**
- **Department: Psychology**
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
  Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1
In Greek:
Πτυχίο Ψυχολογίας
In English:
BSc in Psychology

Programme 2
In Greek:
Μεταπτυχιακό στην Εκπαιδευτική Ψυχολογία
In English:
MSc in Educational Psychology

Programme 3
In Greek:
Programme Name
In English:
 Programme Name
- **Department's Status: New**

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

    - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
    - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
    - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*

- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.3.1).*

- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

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

Findings
The department has been created with the view of initially offering two academic programs (BSc Psychology; MSc Educational Psychology). Recruitment efforts focus on international markets and, for the master's program, also on the Greek market. The department balances teaching and research, as reflected in its mission statement. Engagement with external stakeholders has begun, particularly for Practicum placements. Mechanisms for student feedback are well-articulated.

Response: The department appreciates the EEC's recognition of our strategic recruitment efforts and the balanced focus on teaching and research. We are committed to continuing our engagement with external stakeholders to enhance Practicum placements and other collaborative opportunities. The mechanisms for student feedback will be maintained and regularly reviewed to ensure they remain effective.

Strengths
Thoughtful integration of the department's role in society.
Strong links with external stakeholders due to CIIM's long-standing connections.
Recruitment of faculty with internationally competitive profiles.
Strong research ambitions supported by generous seed funding.

Response: We are grateful for the recognition of our strengths and will continue to build on these foundations. Our strong links with external stakeholders and the business world, as well as our research ambitions, will be key areas of focus moving forward.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations
The SWOT analysis should also cover research activity.
Newly recruited staff have high teaching loads during the set-up phase.

Response: We have included research activity in our SWOT analysis (See Annex 1).
To manage teaching loads, we have put in place clear guidelines of Teaching Load Calculations (See Annex 2) and we have hired one additional faculty member starting September 2024-Dr. Antonia Zachariou (See Annex 3). By hiring an additional member of staff and keeping a modest student intake for AY 2024-2025 we will maintain a favorable student-to-teacher ratio (6.25:1; 50 students:8 faculty members) and will align our future faculty hiring plans with student intakes to preserve such favorable student-to-teacher a ratio.

Low Marks Addressed
1.1.7 The mechanism for collecting and analyzing data and indicators needed to effectively design the Department's academic development is adequate and effective (3):

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Response: We recognize the need to collect and analyse data and have put in place robust data collection and analysis mechanisms, including feedback from students, faculty, and external stakeholders (See Annex 4). This system will help us make more informed decisions regarding the department's academic development.

Compliance
1.1 Mission and strategic planning: Compliant
1.2 Connecting with society: Compliant
1.3 Development processes: Compliant

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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

Findings
The University of Limassol is reviewing its quality assurance process and creating the necessary documentation. Internal quality assurance committees have been established at both the university and departmental levels.

Response: We appreciate the EEC's positive feedback on our quality assurance processes. The newly appointed Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, who chairs the IQEC Committee, oversees the implementation and continuous improvement of these processes.

Strengths
Promotion of a culture of quality through the Internal Quality & Evaluation Committee (IQEC). Establishment of a student welfare unit to address personal problems and difficulties faced by students.

Response: We will continue to support the IQEC's efforts to promote a culture of quality and ensure the student welfare unit remains an integral part of our support services.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations
Some processes still need to be created to guarantee coordination among teaching staff in teaching-learning methodologies, curriculum updating, and lab services/infrastructure.

Response: To guarantee coordination among teaching staff in teaching-learning methodologies and curriculum updating we have adapted the Distance Learning Assessment Framework for the conventional program, and we are standardizing the material across all classes with each instructor providing the following, on a weekly basis: (1) one recent and relevant multimedia source i.e. video; (2) one relevant interactive exercise; and (3) two influential and recently updated reading sources. This adaptation ensures consistency in automated feedback and continuous student support across all modes of delivery and across courses enhancing the overall quality of the educational experience and without any additional load to the instructor. Regarding the lab services/infrastructure the University has shaped a Research Support Policy (see Annex 5).

Low Marks Addressed
2.2.6 The established procedures for examining students' objections/disagreements on issues of student evaluation or academic ethics are effective (3):

Response: We have revised our Appeals procedure to ensure that examination of students' objections/disagreements on issues of student evaluation or academic ethics are effective (See Annex 6-excerpt from Student Handbook).

2.2.11 The Department systematically collects data in relation to the academic performance of students, implements procedures for evaluating such data and has a relevant policy in place (3):

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Response: We are enhancing our data collection and evaluation procedures to systematically monitor and analyze students' academic performance (See Annex 4).

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

3. Administration

Findings
The administrative structure is in line with the legislation and the department's mission.
Transparency in decision-making is not an issue due to the small size of the institution.

Response: We thank the EEC for recognizing the strengths of our administrative structure. As the department grows, we will ensure that administrative processes remain transparent and effective.

Strengths
Well-established governance and administrative structures based on CIIM's model.
Small institution size ensures transparency and involvement in decision-making.

Response: We will maintain these strengths and ensure that as we grow, our governance and administrative structures continue to support the department's mission effectively.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations
Monitoring the effectiveness of rules for disciplinary or academic misconduct, as these have not been tested yet.

Response: We have put in place appropriate guidelines to closely monitor the application of our disciplinary and academic misconduct rules to ensure they are effective and fair (See Annex 7).

Low Marks Addressed:
3.6 Statutory sessions of the Department are held and minutes are kept (4):

Response: Departmental meetings take place once a month based on an agenda distributed in good time, and detailed minutes are recorded and distributed promptly to all relevant parties.

3.10 The Department has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints (3):

Response: As described above we have refined our procedures for handling student complaints to ensure they are clear, accessible, and effectively address students' concerns in a timely and efficient manner (see Annex 6).

Compliance
Administration: Compliant

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas
4.1 Planning the programmes of study **4.2 Organisation of teaching**

Findings
The department has a well-articulated system for designing and monitoring degree programs.
Admission criteria are clear, and feedback from students is used to monitor courses.

Response: We appreciate the positive evaluation of our learning and teaching organization. We will continue to ensure that our admission criteria are consistently applied, and that student feedback is actively used to improve our programs.

Strengths
Limited number of students allows for personalized feedback and engagement.
Effective communication between teaching staff and students.

Response: We will maintain our focus on personalized feedback and effective communication, which are crucial to student success.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations
Creation of a more detailed coordination map for the program's courses.
Development of a clear innovation policy for courses.

Response: We have created a detailed coordination map of the undergraduate program's courses (See Annex 8). For better planning, timely development and advanced resourcing, faculty are kindly requested to propose, by the 30th of June each year, all new programs their School plans to offer for the next academic year. The proposed programs must be accompanied by a preliminary market assessment, resourcing and costing, making a case for timeliness and demonstrated innovation and approved by the Senate and the Council.

Low Marks Addressed
4.1.3 Intended learning outcomes, the content of the programmes of study, the assignments and the final exams correspond to the appropriate level as indicated by the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) (3):

Response: We have reviewed and adjusted the learning outcomes, content, assignments, and exams of our programs to ensure full alignment with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) (See Annex 10).

4.2.8 The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved (4):

Response: To ensure a holistic coverage of intended learning outcomes we are utilising a variety of assessment styles including essays, multiple-choice questions, presentations, interactive activities.

Compliance
4.1 Planning the programmes of study: Compliant
4.2 Organisation of teaching: Compliant.

5. Teaching Staff

Findings
The department has recruited a talented cohort of academic staff. However, the ambitious plans for student recruitment and course delivery may affect the staff's ability to remain research active.

Response: We thank the EEC for recognizing the quality of our teaching staff. We are committed to managing teaching loads effectively (see Annex 2) and actively support research endeavours through the comprehensive Research Support Policy (See Annex 5) to ensure staff can balance teaching and research commitments.

Strengths
Recruitment of a young and talented cohort of academic staff.
Collaborative environment among teaching and administrative staff.

Response: We will continue to foster a collaborative environment and support our staff's professional development to maintain high standards in teaching and research.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations
Accurate modeling of teaching load, including preparation and marking time.
Clear plan for teaching staff recruitment and ensuring diversity in specialties.

Response: We are implementing a more accurate model for teaching load (See Annex 2) and have develop a clear recruitment plan that ensures diversity in teaching staff specialties (we have hired an additional faculty member starting September 2024 (See Annex 3) and the Department is aligning student recruitment with faculty recruitment to maintain favorable student:teacher ratio. These actions will allow the University of Limassol to honor the contracts academic staff have signed, ensure the high quality of their teaching and research endeavors, and promote a healthy work-life balance.

Low Marks Addressed
5.1 The number of teaching staff - full-time and exclusive work - and the subject area of the staff sufficiently support the programmes of study (4):

R*esponse: The Department will ensure that collective full-time staff expertise will continue to adequately cover all subject areas.*

5.7 The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff is sufficient to support and ensure the quality of the programme of study (3):

Response: By hiring an additional member of staff (see Annex 2) and keeping a modest student intake for AY 2024-2025 we are maintaining a favorable student-to-teacher ratio, ensuring high-quality education and support for our students.

Compliance
Teaching staff number, adequacy and suitability: Compliant
Teaching staff recruitment and development: Compliant
Synergies of teaching and research: Compliant

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6. Research

Findings
The department has a clear research policy and has invested in research equipment. Staff are proactively seeking funding and engaging in collaborative research.

Response: We are pleased with the positive feedback on our research policy and activities. We will continue to support our staff in their research endeavors and ensure they have the necessary resources and infrastructure.

Strengths
Strong will to research and proactive approach to seeking funding.
Encouragement of student involvement in research activities.

Response: We will maintain our focus on research and continue to encourage student involvement to foster a vibrant research culture.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations
High teaching loads may impede research activities.
Need for additional research equipment and technical support.

Response: We have developed clear Teaching Load Calculations guidelines (see Annex 2) and a Research Support Policy (see Annex 5).

Low Marks Addressed
6.3 The Department provides adequate facilities and equipment to cover the staff and students' research activities (4):

Response: We have developed a Research Support Policy (see Annex 5) which will allow the Department to invest in additional research facilities and equipment to fully support our staff and students' research activities, including key equipment like EEG and ongoing technical support. For the immediate future we have put in place MOUs with organizations that possess neuroimaging equipment (i.e. electroencephalogram (EEG) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)) and have agreed on sufficient scanning hours that are also included in the annual budget of the Department.

Compliance
Research mechanisms and regulations: Compliant
External and internal funding: Compliant
Motives for research: Compliant
Publications: Compliant

7. Resources

Findings
Budget management is overseen by the Department Council and Chairperson, with support from the Finance Director. The budget is primarily based on enrollment numbers.

Response: We appreciate the EEC's recognition of our sound budget management practices. We will continue to ensure that our budget supports our strategic goals and that financial resources are managed efficiently.

Strengths
Mechanism for budget evolution and execution through coordination with key university officials.

Response: We will maintain our effective budget management practices and ensure that our financial resources are used to support the department's mission and strategic planning.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations
Amend the budget to incorporate research infrastructure.

Response: We have created a Research support policy (See Annex 5) which will facilitate the acquisition and use of research infrastructure and technical support.

Low Marks Addressed
7.3 The Department's profits and donations are used for its development and for the benefit of the university community (4):

Response: We have developed a clear Research Support Policy (See Annex 5) which ensures that profits and donations are transparently allocated for the development of the department and the broader university community.

7.5 The Department carries out an assessment of the risks and sustainability of the programmes of study and adequately provides feedback on their operation (4):

Response: We continue to implement a comprehensive risk assessment process for our current (and future) programs of study, providing regular feedback to ensure their sustainability and continuous improvement.

Compliance
Resources: Compliant

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC has recognized the department's strong start, particularly in staff recruitment and planning. However, there are concerns about teaching loads and the need for additional staff to support the department's ambitious goals.
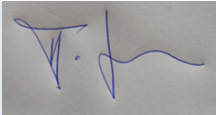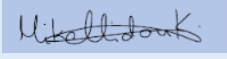
Response
We are grateful for the EEC's comprehensive evaluation and constructive feedback. In response, we have taken a number of steps to safeguard the promising future of the Department. Specifically, (1) we created an accurate teaching load calculation, (2) we hired an additional member of staff starting September 2024, (3) we extended the SWOT analysis to research, (4) we created a framework for systematic data collection for academic development, (5) we created a framework for monitoring the effectiveness of rules for disciplinary or academic misconduct, (6) we created a complaints & appeals procedure for course marks, (7) we structured a Research Support Policy. These steps were taken to create an appropriate environment in which faculty members can excel as teaching instructors, as researchers and as good citizens of the University of Limassol.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Theodore Panayotou	Rector	
Vasilis Polimenis	Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance	
Doron Sonsino	Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities School	
Kyriaki Mikellidou	Vice-Chair of the Department	
Veronica Georgiades	Academic Affairs Manager	
Andreas Mathikolonis	President of Student Council	

Date