

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 07/07/2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
UNIC Athens (Campus of the University of Nicosia)
- **Town:** Athens, Greece
- **School/Faculty:** School of Humanities and Social Sciences
- **Department:** Department of Social Sciences
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1

In Greek:

Ψυχολογία (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Psychology (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor of Science)

Programme 2

In Greek:

NA

In English:

NA

Programme 3

In Greek:

NA

In English:

NA

- **Department's Status:** New



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [\[L.136\(I\)/2015 – L.132\(I\)/2021\]](#).

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.3.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

Introduction

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and thorough work during the onsite evaluation of the Department and our BSc in Psychology programme. We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation. The Department has been found by the EEC to be fully compliant with all European Standards and Guidelines. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified in any of ESGs.

We particularly note the statement in the Conclusions and Final remarks *“In sum, the EEC are delighted to recommend the progression of the Department of Social Sciences, UNIC Athens as compliant under the CYQAA standards, with the strong wishes for the success of the launch of the department in the coming academic year. We would like to thank very much the staff (academic and administrative), students, external stakeholders and senior leaders for giving their efforts to create this compelling application and for welcoming us to Athens where they provided kind access and information supporting our evaluation.”*.

It is important to also note that as per a EEC’s statement, a number of aspects of accreditation could not be fully verified at the time of the visit as the campus and programs were not yet in operation. Due to this fact, the EEC stated their reluctance to award a full award of 5 points to particular standards.

We do welcome the Committee’s recommendations for improvements, which will enhance the quality of our Department, which are addressed in the corresponding sections below.

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

1.1 Mission and strategic planning

1.2 Connecting with society

1.3 Development processes

Sub-area 1.1 – Mission & Strategic Planning

The seven quality indicators in this sub-area average 4.4/5; all seven were rated Compliant. The EEC noted that the Department's mission is well-aligned with the wider UNIC strategy and that short-, medium- and long-term goals are clearly articulated, even though not yet fully public. They praised the inclusive way staff and stakeholders contribute to strategic planning but observed that revision cycles and feedback loops should be more explicitly documented. They also noted that the Department already operates with a coherent, forward-looking mission and a data-informed planning culture.

Sub-area 1.2 – Connection with Society

Across four indicators the average score is 3.3/5; one indicator was Compliant and three Partially Compliant. The Committee stressed that while intentions are positive, systematic mechanisms to engage employers, alumni and the public are still emerging, and public information on the website remains limited during the build-up phase. The EEC noted that individual faculty already cultivate useful community links that can be consolidated into a formal network.

Sub-area 1.3 – Development Processes

The four indicators here average 4.8/5; all were rated Compliant. The EEC commended transparent hiring and workload models that devote up to 50% of staff time to research, a funding model that underwrites sustainable growth, and early success in attracting students. They advised strengthening international partnerships and excellence incentives. The committee also noted the existence of robust staff-recruitment and professional-development procedures, which already underpin a high-caliber academic profile.

Findings

The Department of Social Sciences at UNIC Athens is in an early but carefully structured development phase. It currently offers a BSc in Psychology that aligns with European standards and the University of Nicosia's academic framework, with clear plans for programme and research expansion. The Department has articulated a mission consistent with the institution's broader goals and has outlined a strategic plan with phased academic and staffing growth. During the site visit, faculty demonstrated strong qualifications and commitment, and students reported high levels of academic support and satisfaction. However, while governance structures and academic planning are in place, the campus infrastructure remains under construction, with full completion expected by the end of August 2025. As such, some physical and operational elements—such as dedicated teaching spaces, student services, and public visibility—are still in development and will mature as the campus becomes fully operational.

Strengths

- 1) Clear strategic planning aligned with institutional goals and future academic growth.*
- 2) Accredited and internationally aligned BSc in Psychology, ensuring academic quality and recognition.*
- 3) Highly qualified and supportive faculty, with strong student satisfaction.*
- 4) Diverse international student body, reflecting effective early outreach.*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 1) The Department's mission states a focus on training mental health professionals at its forefront. However, the EEC considered the BSc Psychology programme and future potential programmes to be likely to train a much wider range of future careers. Furthermore, the importance of research does not feature prominently in the mission and the institution's mission and vision is not referenced. There are opportunities for improving (and perhaps shortening the mission statement with these considerations in mind).*
- 2) To achieve full compliance with Criterion 1.2.1, the Department should consider developing formal channels for regularly engaging with societal stakeholders, such as employer advisory boards, community consultations, graduate outcome tracking, or targeted needs assessments that feed into programme and strategy design.*
- 3) To move toward full compliance with Criterion 1.2.3, the Department should implement and document outreach initiatives, partnerships with local communities or professional bodies, and evidence of how its academic and research activities contribute to societal development. Public reporting of such impact would also strengthen transparency and institutional accountability.*
- 4) Our suggestion is that the Department develops a more systematic approach to alumni engagement—such as creating a central alumni database, establishing regular contact*

points (e.g. newsletters, surveys), and involving graduates in departmental development and career support initiatives. This would formalise the good informal practices already in place and create lasting value for both the institution and its alumni.

Summary of Key Findings & Strengths

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) judged the Department's academic profile and orientation to be fundamentally sound and forward-looking. They found that the Department's mission and strategic plan are already well-articulated, clearly aligned with the broader University of Nicosia priorities, and framed around realistic short-, medium- and long-term objectives. The plan benefits from inclusive input—faculty, senior leadership and external stakeholders all contribute—and is underpinned by a transparent funding model and robust data-collection practices. The Committee further noted that staff-recruitment and professional-development procedures are exemplary: selection is rigorous, workload allocations provide generous research time, and there is a culture of mentoring and performance review that supports both teaching quality and research productivity.

Although the Department's formal mechanisms for connecting with society are still evolving, the EEC recognized a strong foundation of informal community links, early outreach activity and an explicit commitment to public engagement and alumni relations. The review team praised the Department's willingness to align its teaching and research with emerging societal needs, its early success in attracting students to the new Athens campus, and the fact that programme specifications already meet European and national academic standards. Overall, the EEC considered the Department well-positioned to become a regional leader in psychological science, noting in particular the coherence of its strategic vision, the strength of its human-resource processes, and an institutional culture that embraces continuous improvement and stakeholder inclusivity.

Department's responses to the EEC recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Refine the mission statement.

We are grateful to the EEC for noting the need to modernize and streamline our mission. We fully agree that our statement should reflect both the breadth of future career destinations and the centrality of research, while explicitly referencing the wider UNIC vision. Accordingly, a small working group—comprising the Head of Department, two faculty representatives and a student member—will draft a concise, future-focused mission that highlights our commitment to mental-health practice and to a wider range of psychology-driven fields (e.g., behavioral data science, health technologies, and wellbeing). The revised statement will be submitted to the Department Council for approval by December 2025 and published prominently on the Department and programme webpages at the start of the Spring 2026 semester.

Recommendation 2 – Create formal channels for regular engagement with societal stakeholders. We fully endorse this suggestion. Building on existing informal links, we will launch a Societal Engagement Forum (SEF) in the next academic year to formalize our existing engagement with

societal stakeholders. The SEF will meet annually and will include employers, community organizations, professional-body representatives, alumni and current students. Its remit will be to provide intelligence on labor-market trends, advise on curriculum relevance and propose joint outreach or research initiatives. Key recommendations and action points from each SEF meeting will be recorded and fed into our annual programme-review cycle.

Recommendation 3 – Document outreach initiatives and publicly report societal impact.

We appreciate the emphasis on transparency and accountability. An Outreach & Impact Register will be created by the Department Office, cataloguing community workshops, collaborative projects, staff media contributions and student volunteering. Beginning with the 2026-27 academic year, we will publish an “Impact & Outreach” section within our annual departmental report, detailing quantitative indicators (e.g., number of engagements, participant reach) and qualitative outcomes (e.g., policy influence, community feedback). This document will be available on our website and shared with the Societal Engagement Forum.

Recommendation 4 – Develop a systematic alumni-engagement strategy.

We agree that a structured approach will add lasting value. By February 2026 we will fully utilize our alumni database, already seeded with graduates of the Cyprus campus to include future graduates of the Athens branch and will be updated annually. A bi-annual e-newsletter, an annual online survey and an alumni group will maintain active communication. Moreover, graduates will be invited to participate in guest lectures, careers panels and the new Alumni Mentors scheme that will pair final-year students with industry professionals from 2026-27 onward. These actions will formalize our informal practices and ensure sustained mutual benefit for alumni and the Department.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

2.1 System and quality assurance strategy

2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

Sub-area 2.1 – System & Quality-Assurance Strategy

The EEC evaluated nine quality indicators in this sub-area and awarded an average of 4.8/5, with every single indicator marked Compliant. The Committee praised the multilayered architecture that links the Campus Internal Quality Assurance Committee (CIQAC) to School, Department and University IQACs, ensuring full alignment with ESG 2015 and both Greek and Cypriot regulations. They highlighted the clarity of the written QA policy—covering teaching, research, support services and societal engagement—and emphasized that decision-making is evidence driven, with KPIs routinely reviewed at Department Council level. The EEC also noted the inclusive culture: faculty, students and external stakeholders all have formal representation in QA processes, and there are explicit safeguards for academic integrity, equality and non-discrimination. While the system is already mature, the evaluators encouraged us to make internal dashboards more widely accessible and to tighten the documentation of feedback loops so that actions arising from data reviews are visible to all constituencies.

Sub-area 2.2 – Quality Assurance for the Programmes of Study

The EEC scored 21 indicators for this sub-area; all received 4 or 5, giving an average of roughly 4.4/5, with every single indicator marked as Compliant. The Committee commended the robustness of programme-level procedures: every course is mapped to learning outcomes, assessment criteria are explicit, plagiarism is checked systematically via Turnitin, and student evaluations feed into a five-year Internal Programme Evaluation Process (IPEP) as well as annual improvement plans. They were particularly complimentary about the transparent appeals mechanism and the way student welfare data are factored into quality discussions. The EEC did, however, recommend broadening the KPI set to include awarding-gap and international-mobility metrics and urged the Department to publish quality data swiftly on the forthcoming Athens website to strengthen transparency for prospective students and external partners.

Findings

As explained above, the documentation provided by the institution and department clearly address the standards required for administration. This was reflected in the discussions with senior academic and non-academic leaders, as well as administrative staff, during the site-visit.

Strengths

1) Strong culture of quality fostered through multi-level quality assurance include the departmental campus IQACs, as well as the programme monitoring committees.

2) *A thorough emphasis on inclusion of students across a diverse range of backgrounds and circumstances which will be important for the success of the programmes more broadly as well as for individual students.*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) *Systematise data analysis and the provision of KPIs to promote its integration into regular collaboration with programme directors to support evidence-based programme improvements. In particular, the department may want to request administrative support to access metrics regarding progression and awarding gaps between diverse groups of students so to ensure the data to support proper inclusive teaching for academic success. Further metrics which may be useful include data regarding internationalisation such as student mobility data.*

2) *At present quality information is not fully publicly available, and so it will be important to have a quick launch to the website.*

Summary of Key Findings & Strengths

The EEC confirmed that UNIC Athens has transplanted the University of Nicosia's well-tested quality-assurance framework to the new campus. A dedicated Campus Internal Quality Assurance Committee works seamlessly with School, Department and University IQACs, ensuring alignment with ESG 2015 and Greek-Cypriot legislation while safeguarding academic integrity and inclusivity. Programme Evaluation Committees monitor student progression, assessment standards and stakeholder feedback, and a five-year Internal Programme Evaluation Process guarantees periodic overhaul of curricula. Students already see tangible influence on course improvements, and anti-plagiarism, appeals and equal-opportunity policies are firmly in place. The chief strengths highlighted were the pervasive "culture of quality", the breadth of QA coverage (teaching, research, societal impact, support services) and the explicit commitment to diverse learner needs. The Committee's sole cautions concern (a) making KPI dashboards more visible and routinely discussed at programme level, and (b) publishing QA information quickly once the Athens website is live.

Department's responses to the EEC recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Systematize KPI data analysis and widen the metric set.

We thank the Committee for emphasizing the importance of granular, real-time analytics. Building on our existing KPI platform, the University is in the testing stage of the AI-driven EVOLVE platform, which will deliver live dashboards showing progression, retention, awarding-gap and mobility data—disaggregated by gender, nationality and other demographic variables. Once EVOLVE is fully deployed, programme coordinators will be able to efficiently review these metrics each semester and incorporate the insights into their programme-improvement action plans.

Recommendation 2 – Make quality information publicly available.

We appreciate the Committee's emphasis on transparency. Our goal is to ensure that all key quality-assurance material—policies, performance indicators, review highlights and external feedback—will be readily accessible on the Department's website. Thereafter, the most relevant indicators will be updated on a regular cycle, and previous reports will remain available to anyone who wishes to consult them, reinforcing our commitment to open communication with students, families and the wider community.

These actions will embed the data-rich ethos commended by the EEC, enhance evidence-based decision-making and ensure that stakeholders can easily verify the quality and inclusiveness of our programs.

3. Administration

Sub-area 3 – Administrative Structure and Processes

The External Evaluation Committee assessed eleven quality indicators in this sub-area and assigned every one the top mark of 5, producing a perfect average of 5.0. The Committee notes that the governance model transferred from the University of Nicosia to the new Athens campus already satisfies Greek and Cypriot legal requirements as well as the European Standards and Guidelines. Responsibility flows clearly from the University Council through the School and Department Councils to the newly formed Campus Internal Quality Assurance Committee, with decisions recorded and communicated at each level. Faculty, students, and administrative staff participate formally in these bodies, which the Committee regarded as evidence of a mature participatory culture. Policies safeguarding academic integrity—including plagiarism detection, grade appeals, and student-complaint procedures—are in place from day one and mirror the well-tested systems operating in Nicosia. Taken together, the Committee's observations present an administration that is exemplary in design, fully compliant with international quality standards, and positioned to scale in step with the campus's ambitious growth trajectory.

Findings

As explained above, the documentation provided by the institution and department clearly address the standards required for administration. This was reflected in the discussions with senior academic and non-academic leaders, as well as administrative staff, during the site-visit.

Strengths

1) Importantly for this transnational academic enterprise, UNIC Athens and its departmental decisions operate under the strategic and operational oversight of the University of Nicosia, and this is clearly supported by charter and administrative governance.

2) The well-defined participatory nature of governance supports the involvement of students in appropriate decision-making bodies. During the site visit, we got the strong impression from students and graduates of the University of Nicosia that this governance ethos was instantiated as a reality for students. The EEC were confident in that this ethos would be transferred to UNIC Athens also.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC identified no significant problem areas. However, a number of areas of focus are provided below as constructive feedback:

1) During start-up in particular, the departmental academics and administrative structure will need to be responsive and flexible as regards challenges and opportunities provided by the local internal and external context in UNIC Athens. Although the centralization of departmental leadership in Nicosia (mirroring school and institutional leadership) is a

strength as regards ensuring well-led and coordinated decision-making, there is a risk that there will be a lot of pressure on leaders in Nicosia to develop research and teaching remotely. During the evaluation visit, the departmental and school academics assured us that there would be a lot of travel and online meetings to support this. However, experience of transnational campus development indicates that these are not sustainable solutions. The EEC recommends that the institution, school and department retain some expectation that increased local flexible leadership and decision-making will be required at some point in order to optimize departmental development (e.g., local departmental UNIC Athens leads for research and teaching), and retain the flexibility to adjust the administrative structure to accommodate this, as appropriate.

2) Relatedly, key departmental appointments (e.g., Department Director) seem to remain to be made, and so this should be expedited.

Summary of Key Findings & Strengths

The EEC commended UNIC Athens for transplanting the University of Nicosia's mature governance culture to its new campus. They highlighted a charter-driven administrative framework that clearly delineates responsibilities among campus, school and departmental bodies, guarantees faculty and student representation in all major councils, and maintains rigorous records of deliberations and decisions. The Committee was particularly impressed by the transparency of procedures for preventing academic misconduct and handling student appeals, and by early evidence of international collaboration embedded within administrative processes. Overall, they judged the Department's administrative backbone to be exemplary, fully compliant with ESG requirements and ready to scale as the campus grows.

Department's responses to the EEC recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Maintain flexibility for local leadership as the Athens campus grows. We thank the Committee for highlighting the importance of responsive, campus-based leadership. Although our current centralized model ensures consistency with the parent institution, we recognize that day-to-day decision making in Athens will need to evolve as enrollment and research activity expand. Over the coming academic year we will monitor workload patterns, student numbers, and emerging operational needs; if those indicators confirm the anticipated growth curve, we will propose to the University Council the creation of Athens-based lead roles—initially in teaching coordination and research facilitation—so that core decisions can be taken swiftly on site while remaining fully aligned with University policy.

Recommendation 2 – Expedite key departmental appointments, particularly the Department Director.

We fully agree with this point and appreciate the Committee's reminder. The Department Director position will be filled internally: one of the three full-time faculty members who will be in post on the Athens campus before the inaugural cohort arrives this fall will be appointed to the role. This



ensures local, day-to-day academic leadership from the very first semester while maintaining seamless alignment with University decision-making processes.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Sub-area 4.1 – Planning the programs of study

Across the five quality indicators the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) awarded scores of 4-5, producing an average of 4.8/5. All five indicators were judged Compliant. The Committee observed that the Department already operates a rigorous design-and-review cycle led by the Campus Internal Quality Assurance Committee in concert with faculty experts. Program objectives, learning outcomes, assessment frameworks and European Qualifications Framework alignment were all deemed exemplary, and the integration of practicum requirements confirms that theory is embedded in practice from the outset.

Sub-area 4.2 – Organization of teaching

The EEC scored eight indicators with scores of 4-5, yielding an average of 4.8/5. Again, every indicator was Compliant. Reviewers commended the transparent admission criteria, consistent credit-transfer policy, clear publication of assessment methods and the strong learner-teacher rapport fostered through small-group teaching. They also noted that student-centered pedagogy is prominently featured, with timely feedback and mentoring structures already in place. Minor points of caution concerned the need to document room-capacity data for future growth and to evidence how theory–practice integration will be monitored over time.

Findings

The Department of Social Sciences demonstrates a well-developed and effective quality assurance system that integrates multiple levels of review, ensures compliance with European standards, and emphasises responsiveness and continuous improvement. The teaching staff of the Department has regular and effective communication with their students.

Strengths

1) The department documentation describes the teaching approach as student-centred, fostering active participation, autonomy, and guidance.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) The documentation indicates formal student representation in institutional quality structures, but does not show clear or active student and stakeholders involvement in the review and development of the Psychology BSc curriculum. A clear procedure that ensures their participation would be necessary, specially in a Department that it expects to grow with new programmes in the following years.

2) *The Department of Social Sciences articulates a commitment to integrating theory and practice in the Psychology programme. However, it would be recommended that the department has a clearer strategy that ensures that its programmes integrate effectively theory and practice (how it will be implemented, evaluated, etc.).*

3) *As it is stated in the institutional report, it is recommended that the institution or the department details data on the number of students per teaching room, particularly for theoretical, practical, and laboratory lessons, to demonstrate the adequacy and suitability of learning environments, and the adequacy of the methodologies the UNIC Athens want to implement.*

Summary of Key Findings & Strengths

The EEC concluded that UNIC Athens has transplanted a mature learning-and-teaching framework from the University of Nicosia to its new campus. Program design is rooted in cyclical review, stakeholder consultation, and explicit mapping of every course to European qualification levels. Admissions, credit-recognition and assessment procedures were praised for transparency and fairness, while mentoring systems and small class sizes support a genuinely student-centered ethos. Faculty already weave current research into syllabi, and practicum requirements and/or classroom theory in real-world contexts. The Committee's suggestions focus on formalizing student-and-employer input into curriculum refresh cycles, publishing room-capacity data as enrollment scales, and codifying a monitoring plan that demonstrates continual alignment between theoretical content and professional practice.

Department's responses to the EEC recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Formalize active student and stakeholder participation in curriculum review. We are grateful for this guidance. Beginning in Fall 2025 the Department will establish the Curriculum Advisory Board that will meet annually. The board will include faculty and student representatives, as well as at least two external stakeholders and alumni. Feedback gathered in these meetings will be logged and submitted to the Program Review meeting each spring, ensuring that suggested improvements are documented, prioritized, and where appropriate, implemented in the following academic year.

Recommendation 2 – Articulate a clear strategy for integrating and evaluating theory–practice links.

The Committee's point is well taken. This observation comes at a timely moment and aligns with our own aspirations for continual improvement. While the integration of theory and practice is a fundamental element of our Psychology programme, we recognize that its strategic articulation could be improved. We will conduct a review to systematize our current efforts and develop a formal framework that clarifies implementation pathways, responsibilities and assessment tools. This will support both internal coherence and external transparency.

Recommendation 3 – Provide detailed room-capacity data to evidence suitable learning environments.

Thank you for noting this practical requirement. The Facilities Department will monitor classroom, seating capacity, technology fit-out, and accessibility for every lecture hall, seminar room and laboratory. The audit results will be included in the next Institutional Annual Report. As enrollment projections are updated each spring, these data will inform any request for additional space or timetable adjustments, ensuring that teaching methods remain feasible and student experience uncompromised as the campus grows.

These actions collectively reinforce our commitment to transparent, stakeholder-informed curriculum development, demonstrable theory–practice integration, and resource planning that keeps pace with student demand.

5. Teaching Staff

Teaching Staff – Quality Indicators and Compliance

The External Evaluation Committee reviewed all indicators under “Teaching Staff” which received scores of 5, producing an overall average score of 5/5. The Committee judged all indicators Compliant. In its comments the Committee underlined three key points: first, the initial full-time faculty cohort is academically and professionally well matched to the Psychology curriculum; second, recruitment follows a transparent, multi-level process that guarantees quality and alignment with institutional priorities; and third, workload allocations reserve a generous share of time for research, thereby fostering a research-informed teaching culture from the outset.

Findings

As explained above, the documentation provided by the department and institution clearly address the standards required for resources. This was reflected in the discussions with senior academic and non-academic leaders, as well as administrative staff during the site-visit.

In sum, The BSc Psychology programme will replicate an existing, and highly successful programme running at UNIC. It will be supported by experienced teaching and research faculty, and recruitment processes are rigorously regulated. Synergies between teaching and research are emphasized, and continuous evaluation mechanisms (including student feedback) are in place to support the development of teaching excellence.

Strengths

1) Faculty hiring is conducted through transparent and multi-level procedures, including the Faculty Selection Committee and Governing Board approval.

2) New and current faculty are supported with professional development opportunities such as Research Time Release, sabbaticals, and mentorship.

3) The university provides a generous balance between teaching, research and administrative responsibilities and each of the 3 current faculty members in the psychology

programme are allocated 30% teaching and between 40% and 50% research time. This will support the UNIC Athens' ambition to be a research-led institution.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 1) While academic freedom and research training are emphasized, formal pedagogical training for teaching methods is less visible.*
- 2) As with the institution, the EEC would like to make strong recommendation that the department give careful consideration to the development of a diverse teaching staff base, one which can provide students with the opportunity to have a sense of belonging with regard to their own personal characteristics (e.g., ethnicity/race/gender).*
- 3) It will also be important for the department to carefully consider the allocation of duties (e.g., ensuring that research/teaching/administrative responsibility are shared equally according to gender).*
- 4) Currently, there are limited plans for faculty hirings associated with the programme. It may be beneficial to consider whether the breadth and plurality of the field of psychology can be adequately taught with only 8 planned faculty, or whether a healthy visiting professorship program could be set up to supplement the core faculty .*
- 5) We would also like to strongly recommend that the department give very careful consideration to the research expertise which they target during hires. Whilst the needs of the broad swathe of coverage of a psychology programme will need to be covered, given the research mission of the university it is significantly more important to capture expertise which can work to the strategic strengths of the department defined by its internal (institutional) and external contexts (e.g., funding landscape in Athens, synergies with external stakeholders etc.).*
- 6) The EEC recommends reviewing the students' satisfaction survey to introduce more detailed statements that help academy to get proper feedback to review teaching and learning process.*

Summary of Key Findings & Strengths

The Committee regarded the Department's teaching staff profile as exemplary for a start-up campus. Recruitment is handled through an open, multi-stage process—Faculty Selection Committee, Academic Council, Governing Board—that mirrors best practice across the European Higher Education Area. Each inaugural faculty member holds a doctorate in psychology and a demonstrable record of peer-reviewed research, ensuring immediate credibility in both teaching and scholarship. The workload model reserves roughly half of each appointment for research, a ratio the EEC praised as unusually supportive for junior scholars and critical to UNIC Athens' stated ambition to become a research-led institution. Professional development is likewise robust:

all faculty qualify for Research Time Release, sabbatical opportunities, and structured mentoring from senior colleagues in Nicosia. Student feedback mechanisms, including end-of-course surveys and direct access to instructors, already operate and feed into annual performance reviews. Overall, the EEC found the Department well placed to deliver high-quality, research-informed teaching while scaling staff numbers responsibly in line with enrollment growth

Department's responses to the EEC recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Enhance formal pedagogical training

We thank the EEC for drawing attention to this point, and we acknowledge that we did not emphasize it sufficiently during the visit. Pedagogical development is already embedded institution-wide through the work of the e-Learning and Pedagogical Support Unit (ePSU), which delivers mandatory training leading to the University Teaching Certificate for all new and existing faculty.

Recommendation 2 – Increase faculty diversity

We share the Committee's concern and are highly sensitive to the importance of building a faculty that reflects the diversity of our students and society. Consistent with the University's Code of Practice on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, we are taking all necessary steps to reach this goal. Vacancy announcements for upcoming roles will carry a clear diversity statement and will be disseminated through professional networks known for engaging under-represented groups.

Recommendation 3 – Monitor equitable workload allocation

Starting Fall 2025, the Department Council will review teaching, research and service loads each semester, disaggregated by gender and rank. Any imbalance will trigger a redistribution plan approved by the Dean to ensure fair workload equity.

Recommendation 4 – Plan for additional hires and visiting professors

We concur that the breadth of psychology may eventually exceed eight core posts. Our staffing model calls for two additional full-time positions by Fall 2027 and a Visiting Scholar scheme that will bring specialists for short teaching blocks or joint research supervision beginning in academic year 2026-27. This will be closely monitored, and necessary adjustments will be made accordingly.

Recommendation 5 – Align future hires with strategic research themes

Position descriptions will highlight priority areas such as behavioral data science, neurotechnology, and digital mental-health—fields that align with institutional strategy and external-funding priorities. Search committees will evaluate candidates on disciplinary fit and potential contribution to these themes.

Recommendation 6 – Refine the student-satisfaction survey

A joint faculty-student working group will revise the survey in the near future. New items will probe teaching methods, formative feedback, and classroom inclusivity. Results will be analyzed

annually and discussed in the curriculum affairs and faculty affairs committees of the Senate closing the feedback loop and ensuring actionable improvements.

These actions will ensure that our faculty remains pedagogically skilled, diverse, strategically aligned and fully resourced to deliver a research-led, student-centered psychology education at UNIC Athens.

6. Research

The External Evaluation Committee evaluated nine indicators under Research, awarding the Department a score of 4 on every item. That yields an overall average of 4/5, with all nine indicators marked Compliant. In its commentary the Committee notes that UNIC Athens already has a clear research policy aligned with its mission; follows the University's Internal Research Regulations; offers seed funding, Research Time Release, and ethics oversight; and embeds research training for students throughout the BSc Psychology curriculum. At the same time, it observes that discipline-specific infrastructure—particularly the future psychology laboratories—has not yet been finalized, and that the scale of external funding remains modest for an institution aiming to build a high-profile research culture. All ESGs 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6 were found to be compliant.

Findings

The Department of Social Sciences at UNIC Athens demonstrates an alignment between its teaching mission of research-led teaching and its emphasis on supporting research in the department. Structures are in place to support both faculty and student research activity. The Department maintains a strong research culture, currently described for the BSc Psychology programme, where faculty members are actively engaged in international research and publish in peer-reviewed journals. Research will be well integrated into teaching through updated course content, research oriented student electives and thesis projects, and supervision by research-active faculty.

Students are provided with a solid foundation in research methodology and are encouraged to participate in empirical research, contributing to the development of analytical and critical thinking skills. Ethical oversight is enforced through institutional mechanisms, including a Research Ethics Committee and mandatory ethics approval for projects involving human participants.

Faculty have access to internal support through the University's Research Time Release scheme and may apply for internal funding to support conference participation and research dissemination. These opportunities are competitive and application-based, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities. While external, non-governmental research funding is modest, it is comparable to other departments in Cyprus and supplemented by internal resources.

The Department's physical and digital infrastructure supports research activities, offering access to relevant academic databases, journals, and statistical tools. However, the EEC finds that more consideration of discipline/subject-specific physical and software resources (e.g. cutting-edge equipment in the to-be-built psychology laboratory, or access and training in coding) could be beneficial.

Overall, the Department will likely have a coherent and functional research environment that is well-integrated with teaching, ethically grounded, and actively supports both staff and student development.

Strengths

1. The department shows a careful consideration of the integration of research and teaching, and we expect that this will ensure that the students will have good exposure to research relevant to their discipline.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. There is currently limited consideration of discipline-specific research infrastructure. While there is currently only one programme within the department, the head of school should give careful consideration to the different requirements for research across the different planned programmes.

2. While the department is new, evidence for attracting international research grants is currently limited and could be enhanced through strategies set at the department level. Currently the funding level would not support ambitious or large-scaled research projects.

3. Internal funding requires an application and may thus be susceptible to bias in provision.

4. Clear procedures should be in place to ensure transparency. Alternatively, the department may wish to consider whether to allocate a specific amount to each faculty member to ensure that they can attend conferences essential for promoting a research culture in the department.

Summary of Findings and Strengths

The Committee regards the Department's research environment as highly promising for a start-up campus. A formal research policy, an ethics framework, time release for scholarship, and seed-funding schemes are already embedded in University regulations and will apply identically in Athens. Undergraduate students receive systematic research-skills training through a sequenced methods curriculum and supervised projects, ensuring that research informs learning from the first year. Faculty publish in reputable international outlets and have secured modest external grants, indicating an active scholarly culture even at this early stage. The principal growth opportunities identified by the Committee concern specialized infrastructure—particularly lab space and software that will accommodate emerging methodologies—and a more aggressive strategy for securing international funding. Overall the EEC judged the Department compliant across all research criteria and well positioned to scale its scholarly activities in line with UNIC Athens' research-led vision.

Departmental Responses to the EEC Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Expand discipline-specific research infrastructure

We appreciate the Committee’s insight and share its ambition for state-of-the-art facilities. The faculty task force overseeing the new psychology laboratory will continuously monitor the equipment specification requirements, with explicit attention to modular space, eye-tracking capability, and provision for future neurotechnology. This review will ensure the lab can flexibly support evolving faculty specializations and advanced student projects as additional programs come online.

Recommendation 2 – Strengthen international grant capture

Thank you for highlighting this priority. Beginning Spring 2026 the Department will run an annual Grant-Writing Bootcamp in partnership with UNIC’s Research Support Office. Faculty will receive structured mentorship on Horizon Europe, ERC, and national-foundation calls, and a peer-review panel will vet proposals before submission. Our goal is to double the number of external-grant applications by the end of academic year 2026-27.

Recommendation 3 – Safeguard equity in internal-funding allocation

We recognize how vital transparency and fairness are to the health of our research culture. Accordingly, we are committed to ensuring that every internal-funding decision is reached through an open, inclusive, and unmistakably equitable process—one that invites diverse perspectives, keeps the community informed, and provides constructive guidance to all applicants.

Recommendation 4 – Ensure conference-attendance support for all faculty

We share the Committee’s view that active engagement in professional venues is indispensable to a vibrant research culture. Accordingly, every full-time faculty member now benefits from a dedicated allowance that supports participation in major conferences and workshops, ensuring they remain visible on the international stage and fully connected to the latest developments in their fields.

These measures demonstrate our commitment to building a vibrant, well-resourced, and outward-looking research ecosystem that aligns squarely with UNIC Athens’ strategic vision and the expectations set out by the External Evaluation Committee.

7. Resources

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) evaluated seven indicators under the Resources area, awarding the Department a score of 5/5 on every criterion. The indicator (ESG 1.6) is marked Compliant. In its justification the Committee praised the robust annual budgeting process, the transparent oversight exercised by University and Campus finance bodies, and the alignment of capital-expenditure planning with the Department's phased academic growth. It highlighted the comprehensive risk-assessment procedures already embedded in institutional audits, the external verification of accounts, and the standing commitment to reinvest surpluses in facilities, student support, and research development.

Findings

As explained above, the documentation provided by the institution clearly address the standards required for resources. This was reflected in the discussions with senior academic and non-academic leaders, as well as administrative staff during the site-visit.

Strengths

1) The well-resourced plans for the library (410m²) with strong e-book and online journal resources via OpenAthens put the resourcing of student learning and student experience on a strong footing.

2) The emphasis on resourcing of student support for careers development, wellbeing, mobility and inclusion studentships is also an area of good practice.

3) The CapEx process provides means for the department to request investment in key areas as they arise. This will be important in the start-up context.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) The psychology labs are not yet constructed and are not planned for construction until the 3rd year of operation. Whilst understandable, this limits the start-up of research programmes and research methods teaching for students in the first years of operation. Given some uncertainty at this stage about the research emphases and expertises which will comprise the department, it would be wise to ensure some level of flexibility in the resources planned for these facilities (at present they include no provision for neuroscience which is something of a disadvantage to a modern psychology department, and especially at an institution which is placing considerable emphasis on medical science and genetics/genomics).

Summary of Findings and Strengths

The EEC found the Department's financial and physical-resource planning to be exemplary for a newly established campus. Annual budgets are formulated through a bottom-up consultation with academic leadership, scrutinized by the University Council and Senate, and monitored through

monthly financial reporting and external audit—offering both strategic alignment and fiscal transparency. Capital-expenditure requests feed directly from Departmental growth projections, ensuring that library holdings, digital infrastructure, and student-support services expand in lockstep with enrollment. Risk-management procedures are embedded in the same cycle: departmental heads receive regular dashboards on program sustainability, student-demand forecasts, and cost drivers, enabling proactive adjustments. Particularly noteworthy is the commitment to reinvest operating surpluses in scholarship funds, mobility programs, and enhancements to learning spaces, creating a virtuous circle that channels financial strength into academic quality. The Committee’s sole caution concerns the timing and specification of the psychology laboratories; it urges flexibility so the eventual fit-out can embrace emerging research directions—especially in neuroscience and allied technologies—without retrofitting costs.

Departmental Response to the EEC Recommendation

Recommendation – Adopt a flexible approach to the forthcoming psychology laboratory build so that the facility can accommodate emerging research directions (e.g., neuroscience) and support methods teaching from year one.

We thank the Committee for underscoring the strategic importance of adaptable research infrastructure, and we fully share this forward-looking perspective. The laboratory design team, comprising faculty representatives and the Campus Facilities Office, has already incorporated modular layouts and expansion points into the initial architectural brief. While the physical build is scheduled for the third operational year, procurement specifications will be kept open during the first two years so that we can integrate equipment aligned with the Department’s evolving research profile, including potential neuroimaging and eye-tracking suites. In the interim, teaching laboratories at our central Athens partner institutions have been reserved to ensure that research-methods instruction and student projects proceed without interruption. This balanced, staged approach safeguards immediate pedagogical needs while future-proofing the laboratory for cutting-edge scholarship as the Department’s research agenda matures.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

In sum, the EEC are delighted to recommend the progression of the Department of Social Sciences, UNIC Athens as compliant under the CYQAA standards, with the strong wishes for the success of the launch of the department in the coming academic year. We would like to thank very much the staff (academic and administrative), students, external stakeholders and senior leaders for giving their efforts to create this compelling application and for welcoming us to Athens where they provided kind access and information supporting our evaluation.

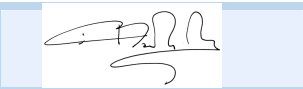

Our key focuses for improvement in the launch of the Department are:

- 1) Embracing the opportunity to engage fully with the institutional mission and vision for UNIC Athens as a thought-leading institution in the realms of data science, AI and their applications across the scope of academic, scientific, and industrial activity.*
- 2) Embracing the opportunity to scope and engage with the local Athens funding and external stakeholder landscape in order to optimise the exploitation of collaborative and financial potential.*
- 3) Having a teaching methodology strategies that guide academy staff, the selection of teaching methodologies, assessment activities, feedback implementation, and guarantees programs coherence and learning outcomes achievement.*
- 4) A careful consideration of how the development of the Department's faculty can reflect the diversity of the student body, and ensure equal opportunities for progression of staff with different personal characteristics and backgrounds.*
- 5) Careful thought to the development of research infrastructure (psychology labs) which can best reflect a forward thinking approach to research in the context of the UNIC Athens mission and vision.*
- 6) A reconsideration of the department's mission to better articulate the contribution that it and its planned suite of programmes and research can and will contribute to society more broadly, with careful thought given to how the mission can lead and inspire colleagues.*

The EEC concluded its review on an emphatically positive note, affirming that the Department of Social Sciences at UNIC Athens not only meets but actively demonstrates compliance with CYQAA quality standards. Reviewers praised the Department's compelling vision, the professionalism of its academic and administrative teams, the enthusiasm of its students, and the constructive engagement of external stakeholders and senior leadership. They underscored the comprehensive, well-documented application and the warm, well-organized hospitality shown during the on-site visit—factors that collectively signal a strong foundation for the Department's successful launch in the coming academic year.

We appreciate the Committee's forward-looking observations and embrace them as a roadmap for our next phase of growth. We are committed to aligning our teaching and scholarship with the University's larger vision for leadership in data science and AI, while actively cultivating Athens-based partnerships that strengthen both our intellectual reach and our funding horizon. At the same time, we will refine our internal guidance on pedagogy, assessment, and feedback to ensure consistency of student experience; reaffirm our dedication to a faculty body that reflects the diversity of those we serve; and keep flexibility at the heart of our plans for research infrastructure so we can support innovative methodologies as they emerge. Finally, we will revisit and sharpen our mission statement to capture more clearly the positive societal impact we seek to achieve and to inspire colleagues and partners alike.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Klimis Mastoridis	Dean of School	
Marios Adonis	Head of Department	

Date: 07/07/2025

