

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 18/06/2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
UNIC Athens (Campus of the University of Nicosia)

- **Town:** Athens
- **School/Faculty:** School of Life and Health Sciences
- **Department:** Department of Health Sciences
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1

In Greek:

Φαρμακευτική (5 έτη, 300 ECTS, Ενιαίο και Αδιάσπαστο Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα)

In English:

Pharmacy (MPharm, Integrated Master, 5 Years)

Programme 2

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

Programme 3

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

- **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

On behalf of the Department of Health Sciences, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its rigorous review and thoughtful recommendations. The report provides an authoritative validation of our current practices while charting a clear pathway for further enhancement. Below, we offer a brief response to each major evaluation area, underscoring the level of compliance you recorded, acknowledging the strengths you highlighted, and indicating the actions we will sustain or expand.

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

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

We are grateful that the EEC judged this area to be **fully compliant** (average 4.71). EEC's acknowledgement of our publicly articulated mission, robust strategic plan, and systematic stakeholder engagement confirms that our academic profile is firmly aligned with European and international expectations. We will continue to revisit our SWOT analysis regularly to ensure our strategic objectives remain evidence-based and socially relevant.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

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

We appreciate the Committee's recognition of our multilayered QA architecture and its **full compliance** rating (4.69). The EEC's positive remarks on the effectiveness of our APEP and IPEP cycles, and on the transparent operation of DIQAC, CIQAC, SIQAC, and UIQAC, reinforce our conviction that distributed—but coordinated—QA structures best serve a trans-campus department. We shall sustain this model while incorporating your minor process-streamlining suggestions.

3. Administration

We thank the EEC for the **full compliance score (5.00)** awarded to our administrative structures. The Committee's commendation of our clear decision-making lines, staff-student representation, and efficient central services confirms that our governance model is both transparent and fit for purpose. We will maintain the current reporting architecture while monitoring workload indicators to preserve administrative agility.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

"Although important and based on the legislation, the panel would like to express its concern not to load individual faculty members with too many duties in the administration. Time devoted to research should not be less than 50% of working time, as indicated in the application."

Response:

We thank the Committee for underscoring the importance of safeguarding research time for our full-time faculty. Research is of utmost importance and remains our top priority. The following measures are already in place and have proven effective in securing the 50 % research allocation as it outlined in the application:

1. Research Time-Release Policy (RTR) & Sabbaticals

- **Guaranteed Release:** All full-time academic staff receive a contractual reduction in teaching and administrative duties to secure at least 50 % protected research time.
- **Teaching Load Caps:** After full RTR approval, Professors teach a maximum of **6 hours per week**, while Associate and Assistant Professors teach no more than **9 hours per week**.
- **Sabbaticals:** Faculty demonstrating strong research activity (peer-reviewed publications, grant awards) are eligible for paid sabbatical leave or further teaching reductions, fostering sustained scholarly engagement.

2. Publications Incentive Policy

- **Scopus-Indexed Publication Rewards**
- **Workload Credits:** High-impact publications also earn additional RTR credits in subsequent semesters.

3. Monitoring & Back-Up Teaching

- **Workload Review:** The Department's Internal Quality Assurance Committee (DIQAC) reviews workloads each term to confirm balance.
- **Adjunct Support:** If recruitment delays occur, protected research allocations are preserved, and teaching gaps are covered by adjunct appointments or teaching assistants.

These combined policies ensure that our faculty maintain a realistic balance between teaching, service, and research—even if hiring schedules shift—thereby fulfilling our commitment to excellence in scholarship and education.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

We are pleased that the Committee rated this area **fully compliant** (5.00) and highlighted our balanced portfolio of pedagogies—simulation, case-based work, interprofessional activities—and our transparent assessment rubrics. EEC's endorsement validates our commitment to student-centred learning and confirms that workload (ECTS), progression rules, and placements are appropriately calibrated.

5. Teaching Staff

We value EEC's positive assessment of our recruitment and staff-development practices (**score 4.60**) and note the partially compliant status (**score 4.00**) linked to overall staffing numbers. We agree that sustaining our excellent student-support ratios is paramount. Our phased four-year recruitment plan—combined with protected research-time and sabbatical policies already in force—will bring us to the recommended staffing complement while preserving the strong research–teaching synergy that the committee acknowledged.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

"The EEC finds the low number of faculty staff potentially problematic. During the presentations it was clear though that the number of staff will increase to more appropriate levels in the future. Therefore, the ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff would be considered satisfactory on the basis of the projected recruitment plans."

Answer

We appreciate the Committee's feedback on faculty staffing and the student–faculty ratio. Our phased, four-year recruitment strategy—comprising comprehensive field coverage, core faculty hiring, adjunct faculty management, and ratio-based reviews—that remains both flexible to enrolment changes and ensures instructional quality. Through this four-step approach, we can adapt hiring to actual student numbers while maintaining a satisfactory student–faculty balance.

Recruitment Strategy

1. Comprehensive Field Coverage

- Over the next four years, we will recruit experts across all core domains—pharmacology, pharmaceuticals, clinical pharmacy, pharmaceutical analysis, pharmacognosy, medicinal chemistry, and biopharmaceutical technology—aligning our teaching and research capacity with departmental priorities.

2. Core Faculty Hiring

- Recruit **at least seven full-time faculty members** with international credentials, active research portfolios, and clinical expertise.
- All candidates will follow Nicosia's rigorous selection process—peer teaching demonstrations, research presentations, and panel interviews—to ensure consistent pedagogical excellence.

3. Adjunct Faculty Management

- Adjunct faculty must hold a PhD and demonstrate teaching excellence. They will complete an initial pedagogical workshop and receive ongoing mentorship from full-time staff.
- They will support introductory and specialized modules under standardized materials and close supervision.

4. Flexible Review & Ratio Monitoring

- **Annual Reviews** by Department and School QA Committees will track recruitment progress, student enrolment, and staffing ratios, enabling timely adjustments.
- **Our plan's flexibility is explicitly tied to the student–faculty ratio:** as enrolment grows, hiring can accelerate; if numbers stabilize, recruitment can pause accordingly.

With a minimum of seven new permanent faculty, two lab/prep assistants, and a calibrated adjunct cohort, we project a student–faculty ratio that meets best-practice benchmarks and supports personalized learning.



The number of staff will increase in the future; therefore, the ratio of students to total teaching staff is expected to be satisfactory based on these projected recruitment plans. Through this structured yet adaptive approach, we will strengthen our permanent faculty roster, maintain high standards among adjuncts, and ensure a consistently excellent educational experience for all students.

6. Research

We thank the EEC for assessing the research environment, ethics procedures, and open-access culture as **fully compliant** (5.00). The Committee's recognition of our laboratory infrastructure, diversified funding, and explicit integration of research into teaching reaffirms research as a core departmental priority. We will build on these strengths by intensifying international grant applications and student research opportunities, as encouraged.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

"Data from experiments needs to be secured and backed up every day. Access to research laboratories should be controlled and restricted only to authorized persons. Electronic locks and surveillance cameras should be applied."

Answer:

We thank the Committee for highlighting the importance of laboratory security and data protection. Our facilities are already divided into distinct security zones: teaching laboratories, standard research areas, and high-value instrument rooms. Access to the latter two categories is limited to authorised staff and approved postgraduate researchers via electronic key-card locks; entry logs are retained for audit purposes, and CCTV surveillance is in operation at all critical points. In addition, a daily data-backup protocol will be implemented: raw and processed experimental files will be automatically duplicated to an on-premise server each night and synchronised to the University's secure OneDrive cloud environment, ensuring both redundancy and off-site protection. These measures collectively guarantee that only authorised personnel can enter sensitive spaces and that research data remain fully safeguarded.

7. Resources

We thank the Committee for confirming **full compliance (5.00)** in the resource's domain. EEC commendation of our sound financial oversight, secure funding streams, and modern campus facilities—including purpose-built research and teaching laboratories—assures us that our resource base is robust. We will continue to match resource allocation to projected enrolment growth and evolving pedagogical needs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

"The panel encourages the Departments to continue establishing collaborative relationships with international organizations, as was the case with NEOLAIa."

Answer

We appreciate the Committee's encouragement to expand our international partnerships. Strengthening global collaborations is a core strategic goal for the Department, and several new initiatives are already in progress. Building on our involvement with the NEOLAIa European Universities Alliance, we are finalising additional agreements—both academic and research-focused—with partners in the EU, the UK and the North America. These forthcoming collaborations will include joint degree pathways, shared research projects under Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ frameworks, and faculty-student exchanges that further internationalise our curriculum.

Formal announcements will follow as each partnership is finalised.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

We sincerely thank the EEC for its comprehensive evaluation. The report confirms our alignment with European Standards and Guidelines, highlights our strengths in strategy, QA, teaching, research, and resources, and offers actionable guidance for continued enhancement. We are fully committed to implementing their suggestions and to sustaining a culture of evidence-based improvement as we pursue our shared mission of excellence in health-sciences education across both the Nicosia and Athens campuses.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Position</i> | <i>Signature</i> |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Prof. Kyriacos Felekkis | Dean | |
| Prof. Christos Petrou | Head of Department | |

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