

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 07/07/2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:** University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Athens, Greece
- **School/Faculty:** Faculty of Sciences and Engineering
- **Department:** Department of Computer Science
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1 – BSc in Computer Science

In Greek:

Πληροφορική (4 χρόνια, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Computer Science (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BSc))

Programme 2 – BSc in Data Science

In Greek:

Επιστήμη Δεδομένων (4 χρόνια, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Data Science (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BSc))

- **Department's Status:** Currently Operating



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 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.*

0. Introduction

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and thorough work during the on-site evaluation of the Department of Computer Science and two of its programs: BSc in Computer Science and BSc in Data Science (Athens campus) on May 29, 2025. We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation. During the visit, the EEC met the faculty supporting the programme, and had separate meetings with students and alumni of the programme from the Nicosia campus, as well as external stakeholders that are members of the Department of Computer Science advisory board.

We would like to also thank the EEC for their **extremely positive** evaluation of the Department where **10 out of 13 quality indicators received the top rating of “Compliant”** (amongst the choices of compliant, partially compliant, non-compliant) and 3 indicators receiving the rating of “Partially-Compliant”.

More specifically, the EEC states, amongst other:

- *“The EEC would like to start by insisting that it is convinced that the faculty members are committed to delivering quality education, as confirmed by students, graduates, and stakeholders.”*
- *“The currently identified UNIC-Athens faculty members are active researchers in their fields. They conduct application-inspired research aiming to make societal impact. They contribute to Open Science, e.g., by publishing open datasets that can foster research development on societally important topics notably, in healthcare.”*
- *“The EEC finds the commitment to teaching proficiency evidenced by the faculty on-boarding programme for incoming faculty members.”*
- *“Students appreciate receiving timely elaborate feedback on their work.”*
- *“Students appreciate availability of teaching staff for face-to-face meetings.”*
- *“There are indicators of a very good faculty–student engagement within the Department”*
- *“There are indicators of a very good engagement between Alumni and the Department”*
- *“The academic staff is active in research, serves on the relevant committee and engages into outreach activities, despite of the heavy teaching load.”*



We do appreciate the committee's recommendations for improvement, which will enhance the quality of our Department and its programs and we will be addressing those in the corresponding section of this response.

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

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

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“By way of its outreach activities targeting high-schools, the Department is making active efforts at attracting future students to its programmes.”*
- *“The website of the Department is clear and informative about its activities (both research and teaching).”*
- *“The EEC appreciates that the Department has several senior associate and full professors ensuring intellectual leadership, and is particularly encouraged to see that it manages to attract and promote female faculty members.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

1. 1 *“While the EEC appreciates that the Department has several senior associate and full professors ensuring intellectual leadership, and is particularly encouraged to see that it manages to attract and promote female faculty members, it strongly encourages that recruitments / promotions into positions at UNIC-Athens maintains that trajectory towards gender balance.”*

Response/Action:

As the EEC acknowledged, the Department already has several female professors at the top academic ranks who also hold leadership positions in the Department (Head, Associate Head, Program Coordinator). The Department is committed in maintaining this trajectory towards gender balance with the UNIC-Athens recruitments.

1. 2 *“The Department mission statement is somewhat generic — thus, difficult to disagree with, but also impossible to measure the Department performance against. The EEC would recommend that the department collectively reflects on a more specific, ambitious, and quantifiable strategic vision for the next 5+ years. This could, for example, include ambitions of increasing visibility through organising a major international conference on one of the campuses ; of ensuring that at least 30% of the faculty members spend a semester on sabbatical abroad*

over the next 5 years, so as to widen your international academic network ; of establishing an “industrial PhD programme” to increase joint academic/industrial research; or ensuring that 20% of your BSc-graduates participate in research as evidenced by joint authorship with faculty. The EEC insists that this list of suggestions is not prescriptive, but intended to inspire reflections among the colleagues within the Department on “where you want to be in 5 years time”?”

Response/Action:

We would like to respectfully note that the Department’s strategic vision was included in the documentation submitted for review, and may not have been fully considered in this comment. More specifically, the Department indeed has a strategic vision and has clearly outlined the strategic planning methodology for the design of the 2025-2030 strategic plan given in Section D.2 of the “Application For Departmental Evaluation” form (200.3). More specifically the table given in D.2 outlines the Department’s strategic goals. These goals are divided into three main pillars: Pillar I: Education, Pillar II: Research and Impact, Pillar III: Governance and Organization. Along with the strategic goals, the table depicts success factors for each pillar and high-level initiatives that will be adopted by the Department in order to achieve the outlined strategic goals. In addition to this extensive table of strategic pillars in section D.2 of the submitted form, the Department also added KPIs (using the S.M.A.R.T. methodology) which outline measurable objectives and clear actions, ensuring continuous development in the areas of student-centered education, impactful research, societal engagement, global reach, faculty and staff advancement, and effective resource allocation. The baseline and target values, combined with assigned responsibilities and timelines, facilitate structured planning and regular performance evaluation. These KPIs are shown in section E. 3 of the “Application For Departmental Evaluation” form.

1.3 *“The Department has not structured its industry representatives into a formal “industrial advisory board” and does not call upon them in a structured and regular fashion. The EEC suggests that organising a formal advisory board, convening them regularly and more frequently than when re-accreditation is needed, and proactively soliciting their input, would be beneficial.”*

Response/Action:

We appreciate the EEC’s suggestion regarding the formalisation of an Industrial Advisory Board. While the Department currently maintains an Advisory Board, we agree that establishing a more structured framework — including regular meetings with all members and a formal mechanism for feedback — would enhance the relevance and responsiveness of our programmes. To this end, the Department is planning to convene Advisory Board meetings at the end of each academic year, with the aim of reviewing current industry trends and advancements and ensuring their alignment with our curriculum. The composition of the Board will include the external advisory board members and is extended to include Athens-based industry partners, the Head and program coordinators, an Athens Campus representative as well as a student member.

1.4 *“In view of the extension of the Department at UNIC-Athens, the EEC suggests that formally establishing an UNIC-Athens-specific “Industrial Advisory Board” may be an efficient way of creating and fostering strong connections with local industry (thus, employers/sponsors, and potential research collaborations) — especially if it is convened regularly (say, once per semester or year).”*

Response/Action:

We appreciate the EEC for the valuable suggestion regarding the establishment of an Athens-specific Industrial Advisory Board. In light of the Department’s expansion in Athens, we fully agree that strengthening ties with local industry stakeholders is essential. Rather than establishing a separate board, the Department plans to formalize a single, institution-wide industrial Advisory Board (as mentioned in 1.3 above) that includes dedicated representation from Athens-based industry partners. This will ensure strategic coherence across locations while still addressing local industry needs and opportunities. As mentioned in 1.3, we aim to convene this board on a regular basis (once per academic year), with meetings designed to include input from both Nicosia- and Athens-based stakeholders. This structure will also support cross-site collaboration and a unified academic and research direction.

1.5 *“The EEC has examined the ECTS credit assignments for the courses in the programme. As a reminder, one ECTS credit corresponds to, on average, 27.5h of “student work hours”. This includes lectures, labs, homework, and reading/studying before/after class.*

- *A 4-year programme that amounts to 240 ECTS credits corresponds to about 6600 hours of “student-work-time”. This, according to the findings listed (number of self-study hours reported by the students, the number of hours/week, and the number of total hours reported in the tables in the documents submitted for accreditation of the respective programmes) leads to the following inconsistencies:*
 - *Students reported to spend 2800h of “student-work-hours” to complete the program — which corresponds to only about 42% of the required number of student-work-hours required for a Bachelors degree*
 - *Assuming that for each “contact hour”, a student also spends 1 hour on “studying outside of class” (which is 50% more than the students that the EEC met reported), that would mean that the total number of student-work-hours to obtain a Bachelors degree would be:*
 - *For the BSc-DS: 2575h — which corresponds to only 39% of the hours required.*
 - *For the BSc-CS: 2768 h — which,, corresponds to only 42% of the hours required.*

- *The EEC has also examined closely the descriptions of a selection of courses offered in the two programmes in detail. Each of these courses grants 6 ECTS credits — and which, therefore should correspond to 165h of student-work-hours. For the courses examined, and in comparison to what the ECC has seen in other institutions in Europe for courses of similar or identical content, the number of ECTS credits assigned appear inconsistent. This observation is in agreement with the previous calculations.*
- *With this in mind, the EEC strongly recommends that the Department re-evaluates each of the courses and their descriptions in the two programmes, and ensure stronger alignment between the course contents and the number of ECTS credits that they contribute to the degree, according to European standards.”*

Response/Action:

We believe there was a miscommunication between the EEC and the students. According to the above comment of the EEC, the students reported 2 hours of study time per course per week (in addition to the 3 contact hours per course per week). This is clearly not an accurate number considering the amount of homework, assignments, projects and slides that the students have to go through each week. Each course carries 6 ECTS which corresponds to a range of 150-180 hours. We have structured our courses with 150 hours of total workload. This workload is consistent with what our students report to us. We have added the breakdown of the workload of each course in the course outlines which are attached with this response.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

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

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“The EEC finds the commitment to teaching proficiency evidenced by the faculty on-boarding programme for incoming faculty members.”*
- *“The Head of the Department of Computer Science and others in leadership roles such as Degree Co-ordinators are female — which is commendable as role models for gender balance in STEM subjects.”*
- *“During our conversations with stakeholders, the EEC was reassured that the QA policy of the department, in terms of grade fairness and predictability of student outcomes, is effective. The EEC is reassured that the policy ensured no reported incidents of intolerance, or bullying against students or staff.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

2.1 *“The EEC finds the proposed structure for the relationship between UNIC-Athens and UNIC with respect to Senate representation to be inherently unfair. The EEC recommends that they reflect on how UNIC-Athens faculty members be granted representation on the Faculty Senate. Without being prescriptive this can, for example, allowing the Academic Council of UNIC-Athens to nominate or elect representatives or observers”*

Response/Action:

We take on board this recommendation which we will address with the Senate and the University Council. Having said that, we know that this was extensively discussed at these two bodies and it was eventually decided that campus personnel will be participating at the campus level bodies. This is a campus level regulation applying for all Schools and programs. In order to implement this particular EEC suggestion there is a need for change of the Internal Regulations that have been provided to both Quality Assurance Agencies as part of the institutional evaluation accreditation. It is not up to the Department of Computer Science not to align with University regulations.

2.2 *“The EEC notes that while an ad-hoc curriculum change process over email may be passable in a small and tightly-knit department, it has both scalability and tractability issues. As the Department is creating an extension at UNIC-Athens that will be delivering the same programmes, a formalisation of the curriculum change processes is recommended. The EEC notes that rather than being an ad-hoc process, curriculum updates be done at regular and*

scheduled intervals (for example: at the end of a semester) for programs that need it , and be done in a more formal process through submission of a written proposal by the course leader, for approval by a given date. The EEC further recommends that mechanisms be put in place to record curriculum updates and ensure that all courses be examined and reviewed regularly. The EEC suggests that this, for example, can be through formalising feedback to all courses by stakeholders (graduates, students, industrial partners, faculty members) by soliciting at least every 3 years on a rolling schedule.”

Response/Action:

We would like to clarify a possible misunderstanding regarding the Department’s curriculum change process, particularly the reference to it being conducted “over email”. While email may occasionally be used for coordination or communication purposes, the actual process is formal and structured. The curriculum changes presented in the recent visit were initiated and reviewed by a Curriculum Committee, approved by the Department Council, and composed of both faculty and student representatives. The committee held scheduled meetings, with decisions recorded in formal minutes. These were then presented to the Advisory Board for further feedback and suggested changes. The final changes were discussed and approved by the Department Council and the School Council.

That said, we fully acknowledge the EEC’s recommendation regarding formalisation and systematisation, particularly in the context of our expansion to UNIC-Athens. The Department is committed in following the University’s Internal Programme Evaluation Process (IPEP) as outlined in the Internal Regulations, Chapter Three: Policies For Programmes Of Study.

2.3 *“The EEC suggests that it would increase fairness and further reduce potential biases, if exams and assignments were anonymised, and/or graded by a 2nd grader.”*

Response/Action:

The Department follows the University exam regulations where the examinations are not anonymised. Although we do appreciate the EEC’s recommendation as a contribution to fairness, some assessment formats in our courses are inherently personal or interactive, making anonymization impossible (for example: presentations, class participations, quizzes and labs). Although utilizing a 2nd grader would be impractical to utilize for all courses, we do utilize 3 graders in the Final Year Project courses, which are 2 courses (12 ECTS) in the final year of studies. These projects are presented in a 3-member committee consisting of the project supervisor and another 2 examiners. It should also be noted, that the University already has an established petition policy that enables students to request a second, blind grading of any exam or assessment. This policy provides an additional layer of fairness and transparency, ensuring that concerns about grading bias or errors can be formally addressed through a structured review process.

3. Administration

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“The Department is run in a collegiate fashion and works as a cohesive unit.”*
- *“The Department has a petition system in place for students who wish their performance in examinations to be reviewed within one month of the release of the marks. Students have access to their scripts and can discuss the marking decisions with their instructors.”*
- *“The Department has a well-defined procedure in place for dealing with plagiarism with the involvement of the Head of department in serious cases.”*
- *“Support is provided for international matters such as Erasmus mobility programmes and recruitment of overseas students.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

3.1 *“Whereas it is a virtue that academic matters are deliberated in open meetings, it could also result in decisions being stalled due to lack of agreement. For example, the introduction of Machine Learning as a compulsory course in the early years has been debated but a decision to implement this move has been postponed. On occasions the department needs to be decisive in reaching decisions promptly based on academic merit, especially when the Department is distributed in different locations.”*

Response/Action:

The Department values its collegial and inclusive approach to academic governance, where curriculum changes and strategic decisions are discussed transparently among faculty and student representatives. This inclusive process ensures broad support and alignment, particularly for impactful decisions such as introducing compulsory courses in the early years of the programme.

We appreciate the EEC’s observation regarding the balance between open academic deliberation and the need for timely decision-making. The debate regarding the introduction of Machine Learning as a compulsory early-year course reflects both the importance of the topic and the need to align with the structure of the overall curriculum without redundancy, given that a significant number of ML courses already exist at later stages, as specialized major electives. That said, we recognise that in some situations — especially with the Department now operating across multiple locations — delays in decision-making can become a challenge. To address this, the Department will consider ways to improve efficiency, such as setting clearer timelines for academic decisions and ensuring structured follow-up when consensus is not quickly reached. This will help preserve the inclusive nature of our processes while ensuring that critical decisions are made in a timely and effective manner.

3.2 *“The Department should consider appointing a Departmental Academic Misconduct Officer who will review issues of academic misconduct such as plagiarism and free the Head to concentrate on strategic decisions.”*

Response/Action:

We agree with the EEC’s recommendation regarding the appointment of a Department Academic Misconduct Officer. Until now, the respective Programme Coordinators have acted as the first point of contact for such cases. While this approach has worked well in a smaller departmental setting, we recognise the value of greater consistency as the Department grows. To that end, we will appoint a Departmental Academic Misconduct Officer to serve as the central point of contact for all cases. This will help ensure that incidents are handled in a more uniform manner across programmes, and it will also allow the Head of Department to focus more fully on strategic planning and leadership.

3.3 *“The Department should consider marketing their courses more widely to attract overseas students from Europe, Middle East and Africa to augment student numbers on the course.”*

Response/Action:

The University’s Marketing Department, in collaboration with the Recruitment Unit, is actively promoting our programmes abroad. This strategy has been working effectively, as demonstrated by the strong international representation in our student body at the Nicosia campus — with 38% of students in the last academic year coming from non-Cypriot and non-Greek backgrounds.

That said, we agree that there is further potential to expand our international reach, especially with the opening of the Athens campus. The Department will continue working with the University’s central teams to explore targeted outreach efforts across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, including through strategic partnerships, showcasing alumni success, and highlighting our strengths in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, IoT and Cybersecurity.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- “Students appreciate receiving timely elaborate feedback on their work.”
- “Students appreciate availability of teaching staff for face-to-face meetings.”
- “The EEC would like to start by insisting that it is convinced that the faculty members are committed to delivering quality education, as confirmed by students, graduates, and stakeholders.”

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

4.1 “The EEC observes that it is normal for courses to evolve over time: new concepts emerge and take priority, and the relevance of others may fade. In some topics, for courses that have been long-running, it is almost inevitable that their content currently has little to do with what the original course description stipulated.

To accommodate this, the EEC strongly suggests putting in place a systematic and periodic process, which: (i) updates course descriptions to be authentic to the content being delivered, including the learning outcomes and key concepts, (ii) internally within the department audits that the descriptions are accurate, (iii) solicit external stakeholder feedback for these course description — for example, using a two-phased approach by first asking “For a course with the title XXXX, what content/concepts/buzz-words would you expect to see that would be applicable in your lab/company/organisation?”, and then asking “does this course description match your expectations for the course XXXX?”. And, of course, (iv) finally take the feedback into account in updating the course description and/or the course, in a tractable way.”

Response/Action:

We appreciate the EEC’s comment on how to update our curriculum. We also appreciate the EEC note at the start of this recommendations that: “These “areas of improvement” are, therefore intended to be collegial and friendly suggestions from peers who wish to see the programmes at UNIC-Athens succeed as much as the current faculty members.”

We fully agree with the recommendation to adopt a systematic and periodic process for updating course descriptions, learning outcomes, and key concepts. While such practices are already in place at the Department — including regular curriculum reviews that incorporate feedback from the Advisory Board — we recognise the value in enhancing and formalising these processes.

In line with this, and as noted in our response to point 1.3, the Department has committed to strengthening the role of the Advisory Board, including annual meetings with full participation and a more structured mechanism for soliciting external feedback. We also find the two-phase feedback method proposed by the EEC to be very insightful, and will explore ways to integrate it into our course review practices in a tractable and sustainable manner.

4.2 *“The EEC would also recommend that, as part of that process, the department considers the proportions of “theory” and “hands-on/lab exercises” for each course. While we fully recognise that it is much more time-consuming to construct, and execute, practicals than it is to “teach theory”, we believe that it would add immense value to the programmes of the department — and, in any event, was strongly solicited by students and external stakeholders.”*

Response/Action:

We agree with the EEC on the importance of systematically evaluating the balance between theoretical and hands-on components across the Department’s courses. While many of our courses already integrate applied components — including labs, programming assignments, and project-based learning — we recognise that this balance can evolve over time and must be regularly reviewed. To this end, the Department will incorporate into its curriculum review process a formal checkpoint to assess the proportions of theoretical instruction versus practical engagement in each course. This review will be guided by input from stakeholders such as students, faculty, graduates, and industry partners, and will be undertaken as part of our structured curriculum update process (as also noted in response to point 4.1). This will help ensure consistency across courses and continuous alignment with both academic standards and professional expectations.

5. Teaching Staff

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- “The currently identified UNIC-Athens faculty members are active researchers in their fields. They conduct application-inspired research aiming to make societal impact. They contribute to Open Science, e.g., by publishing open datasets that can foster research development on societally important topics notably, in healthcare.”
- “There are indicators of a very good faculty–student engagement within the Department”
- “There are indicators of a very good engagement between Alumni and the Department”
- “Faculty members are well-informed about quality assurance aspects including individual course improvement, and with how to deal with potential misconduct of students.”
- “Faculty members is well-informed about the student safety aspects.”
- “The Department provides mentorship for new hires, and informs them about expectation for promotion to higher ranks.”
- “New hires may apply for, and can obtain, an UNIC Seed-grant.”

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

5.1 *“The EEC estimates that the current plan to start with 4 faculty members at UNIC-Athens, and to then hire two additional faculty members annually until reaching 10, is risky — especially in terms of ensuring timely and sufficient support for the the two BSc programmes that are opening, and with the projected student intake of 50/year/programme. While the EEC recognises that this staffing plan may satisfy legal requirements, the EEC considers that there are clear risks to not having enough well-qualified staff in place to deliver the programmes at the quality that is expected, and to contribute to evolving the programme as the state-of-the-art advances. Consequently, the EEC recommends — and recognising that the financial aspects are a factor — that insofar as it is possible, the faculty recruitment be accelerated in order to mitigate these risks.”*

Response/Action:

We would like to denote that the Department has already completed the hiring process for 4 faculty members, above the minimum requirement as defined by the Greek legislation for private universities. Moreover, for the entire first year the load of the new hirings is: 1 faculty member with 1 course; 1 faculty member with 2 courses; and 2 faculty members with 3 courses. This load completely satisfies the requirements of the department for the first year without requiring adjunct faculty. In additional, another 6 faculty hirings have been approved by the University

Senate and with these the offerings of the programme are satisfied. Nonetheless, if additional needs are identified by the department, a request will be issued to the Senate. In addition, and in accordance with the CYQAA guidelines and the Greek legislation, adjunct faculty will be sought to cover specialized elective courses with industry ties.

5.2 *“The EEC considers the SSR of 40:1 that will result after 3 years of operation to be unreasonably high by European standards. It is also EEC’s understanding that the CYQAA recommends to aspire to maintain a much lower (single-digit) SSR. Consequently, the EEC recommends reflections on how to ameliorate the SSR.”*

Response/Action:

We would like to note that our initial plans to fully cover the 1st year included 2 faculty members based on the courses to be offered. We increased this number to 4 based on the Greek legal requirement. Year 2 starts with 6 faculty members, year 3 with 7 and year 4 with 10.

The 40:1 SSR as calculated by the Committee after the 3 years of operation is under the assumption that the attrition rate is 0% and does not take into consideration numbers of Full-time equivalence (for both students and faculty). This FTE statistics is the norm and standard approach used in calculating the SSR ratio by the international ranking organizations. Although our KPIs include a low attrition rate, based on the Nicosia data an average attrition rate of 10% (over the first 3 years) is the norm in our programmes. Furthermore, we expect to have visiting and adjunct faculty every year; the full-time equivalence of the visiting/adjunct faculty are estimated to be: 1 in year 1, 2 in year 2, 2 in year 3 and 3 in year 4. With regards the number of student full-time equivalent this is (based on the Nicosia experience) 87% of the headcount.

The table below provides a full analysis of the SSR during year 1 to 4 (inclusive) based on the above information and with the assumption (worst case scenario for high SSR) that we will be meeting our target which is 100 new students per year.

Year	#students	#FTE students	#students progressed to next year	#FTE students progressed to next year	#FT Faculty	#FTE Adjunct/ Visiting Faculty	#FTE faculty	SSR
1	100	87	88	77	4	1	5	17
2	188	164	169	147	6	2	8	20
3	269	234	250	218	7	2	9	26
4	350	305	N/A	N/A	10	3	13	23

Where:

FTE Student: 0.87

Retention Y1: 0.88

Retention Y2: 0.9

Retention Y3: 0.93

Having said this and subject to meeting our targets we will be hiring additional faculty members in year 4.

5.3 *“The EEC recommends that the faculty profiles sought, in view of the teaching requirements and the inconsistencies in the presentation indicated under findings, be clarified, and the profiles clearly described.”*

Response/Action:

The inconsistencies described were due to typing error of the course code, and we thank the Committee for spotting this. We have corrected the COMP-448 NLP which should be COMP-348 NLP in Table 3 of the application form of the BSc Data Science program as show in the attached table. COMP-348 NLP completely aligns with the expertise of F9 as shown in Table 4 of the same application form.

5.4 *“Cognisant of the realities of the labour market, and the profiles that make for attractive hires both for academia and from industry, the EEC notes that it may be difficult to hire experts in deep learning, generative AI, and modern NLP with short notice. The EEC urges UNIC-Athens to consider opening positions and to start scouting for qualified educators (with PhD and publication track record in deep learning, generative AI, and modern NLP) as soon as the financial situation allows. An alternative plan could be to grow local talent at UNIC (e.g., through proposing PhD fellowships within these fields), specifically targeting recruitment at UNIC-Athens.”*

Response/Action:

After receiving this recommendation the Department will be prioritizing the next hiring to be from the denoted specialization. Moreover, instead of kick-starting the process for the 2nd cycle of hirings at the start of the Spring 2026, this will be brought forward to the Fall 2025 semester.

5.5 *“The EEC also recommends inviting experienced Visiting Professors to help develop an effective strategy implementing the research strategy and educational vision of the department, within these areas. Such a personality may also be a vehicle to attract qualified faculty for specialised courses, and to boost research productivity through international collaboration.”*

Response/Action:

We appreciate the suggestion of the EEC for Visiting Professors and we would like to note that the Department already has Visiting Faculty. Professor Yannis Manolopoulos, who is also a Professor Emeritus at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, is currently a Visiting Professor in our Department since October 2024. In addition, Dr. Ivan C. Christov, Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Purdue University, USA, has also served as a Visiting Faculty for 6 months in 2022 and 2023. Therefore the Department fully supports the idea of inviting distinguished scholars to contribute to the development and implementation of our

research strategy and educational vision and for this reason we plan on continuing this practice of Visiting Professors, especially in the Athens campus.

5.6 *“In the experience of the EEC members, it takes time to develop a robust and vibrant ecosystem within a department, including postdocs, PhDs, teaching assistants. The EEC recommends taking full advantage of the incredible chance that it has to recruit 6 new faculty members over the next years, to establish an ambitious vision for how to develop this vibrant ecosystem over the next five year period. Such an ambitious vision could, for example, include a plan for establishing well-equipped labs and shared facilities (possibly in partnership with industrial partners) ; support grant acquisition (via your European network) ; foster a strong research culture from faculty and students alike and encourage/reward publication in top-tier venues — and facilitate active conference participation. Aligning such a vision with the recruitment strategy for these new colleagues — the EEC humbly suggests — may increase the chances of hiring faculty with strong research records and/or high potential.”*

Response/Action:

We fully agree with the EEC about the importance of cultivating a vibrant academic and research ecosystem within the Department. The recruitment of an additional six new faculty members over the next years presents a unique and timely opportunity to align our long-term strategic vision with targeted academic growth and research excellence.

The Department strategic goals, as mentioned in the response/action to point 1.2 above and which were included in Section D.2 of the “Application For Departmental Evaluation” form (200.3), support this vision. This includes goals in faculty recruitment, lab and infrastructure development, industry engagement, international research collaboration and grant acquisition amongst others. The upcoming recruitment of faculty at UNIC-Athens represents a key opportunity to reinforce this vision, and hiring criteria are being aligned accordingly to attract high-calibre academics in emerging and interdisciplinary areas.

As also noted in our SWOT analysis, shown in section D.13 of the aforementioned submitted form, the recent establishment of the Athens campus, offers a significant opportunity to expand our regional impact, increase access to academic and industry partnerships, and broaden our postgraduate talent pool across the EU. This expansion is directly tied to our goals of increasing research activity, fostering innovation, and elevating the Department’s international visibility.

5.7 *“Aligned with the recommendations to develop a vibrant research ecosystem, the EEC suggests that a new university branch may also be an opportunity to develop trailblazing pedagogies and a rich portfolio of teaching methods — and to this end, respectfully suggests providing pedagogical training beyond the current requirement (e.g., flipped classrooms, challenged-based learning, research-based education, ...).”*

Response/Action:

All newly hired faculty are required upon appointment to undergo the 12 week UNIC pedagogical training sessions (3h/week) that cover innovative educational aspects such as project- and challenge-based learning (incl. flipped classrooms). In addition, the ePSU unit of the University continuously offers several trainings on pedagogical topics that existing staff must follow and these seminar series are denoted by faculty in their yearly self-assessment report and their promotion ranking application. Examples of the most recent training series of this semester include the 5-week (2h/week, 9/5-6/6/2025) on “Including Students with Diverse Needs in Higher Education” as well as the 4-week (2.5h/week, 17/6-8/7/2025) on “Mastering AI tools for academic use”

5.8 *“Finally, the EEC strongly recommends that the situation of the program coordinators be clarified and that the teaching staff in the BSc-CS and BSc-DS programmes be supported by program coordinators, who are members of, and located at, the faculty at UNIC-Athens.”*

Response/Action:

We would like to clarify that, as presented during the visit, both programs at the Athens campus, the BSc Computer Science and the BSc Data Science, each have their own Program Coordinator, who is a member of, and located at, the faculty at UNIC-Athens.

6. Research

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“The academic staff is active in research, serves on the relevant committee and engages into outreach activities, despite of the heavy teaching load.”*
- *“The faculty members are moderately successful in attracting European funding.”*
- *“The faculty members published jointly with MSc and BSc students at UNIC. (And EEC encourages to transfer this practice to UNIC-Athens).”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

6.1 *“The EEC encourages the Department to develop their research mission and vision — and a strategy for achieving them.”*

Response/Action:

As noted in our response to point 1.2, the Department has already articulated its strategic vision and goals — including those specific to research — in the documentation submitted for review. These include clearly defined strategic pillars, with associated goals, initiatives, and success factors, as well as a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that provide measurable targets for research output, collaboration, and impact.

6.2 *“The EEC encourages faculty members to engage stronger in research collaborations with industry, including co-publications with industrial partners and bring this research collaboration more actively into education.”*

Response/Action:

We appreciate the importance of research collaborations with industry and our Department faculty have a long list of such collaborations as shown in section D. 6 of the form submitted for review. These collaboration lead to joint research proposals/projects and a number of joint publications. In addition, our Department employs Adjunct Faculty that are industry researchers for teaching specialized major electives courses, exposing student to their research and utilizing real-datasets. In addition, the Department host a number of research seminars throughout the year, from the industry. These events help students understand how research is translated into real-world applications and encourage networking and engagement with the professional community.

We remain committed to further strengthening these research collaborations with industry even further, taking advantage of the Department’s recent expansion to Athens, which offers new opportunities for partnerships with local and regional industry leaders. This includes plans to engage industry partners in Athens through collaborative research projects, student internships, co-supervision of theses, and participation in specialized seminars and advisory input.

6.3 *“The EEC encourages a stronger reflection on the alignment between research policy and recruitment policy. This can help to increase synergies between research and teaching.”*

Response/Action:

We agree with the EEC for the importance of aligning research and recruitment policies. Our recruitment plans prioritize hiring faculty in key research areas aligned with our strategic agenda. This approach helps to create strong synergies between research and teaching, supporting both the department’s core focus and its broader academic mission.

6.4 *“The EEC encourages the Department to develop a strategy for helping students to acquire research skills.”*

Response/Action:

We would like to note that our students are involved in research. Besides our graduate level programs where research is a fundamental aim of the programs and have specific courses on research skills such as the course Research Seminars and Methodology, we also engage our undergraduate level students to research in multiple ways: through project courses as early as year 2, as well as in the Final Year project which is in their senior year. Some of these projects resulted co-authored publications in refereed conference proceeding with the student and supervisor. It should be noted that at least 10 such publications in the last 5 years where co-authored with undergraduate students. We also host a seminar series each semester (Fall and Spring) where all our students are encouraged to attend, including the undergraduates. In addition to what we have already been practicing, we have now added formal training in data science research methods as a learning objective of COMP-248: Project in Data Science and the year-long Final Year Project I and II in both undergraduate programs. It is also important to note that some undergraduate students are invited to participate in research project before they even graduate.

6.5 *“The EEC encourages the Department to stimulate top quality research and targeting A/A* ranked venues in computer science and data science and/or venues with higher visibility in application domains for its dissemination.”*

Response/Action:

We appreciate the suggestion by the EEC. We actively encourage faculty to publish in A/A* ranked conferences and journals in computer science and data science, as well as in high-visibility venues within relevant application domains. This focus is being supported through mentoring initiatives, internal peer review, and recognition of high-quality publications, for example through the Research Recognition Award established by the University, and given to full-time and adjunct faculty publishing in top fora.

6.6 *“The EEC strongly encourages the Department in Athens, when established, to actively seek industrial research funding sources, to be comparable to international CS departments.”*

Response/Action:

We fully share the EEC’s view on the importance of securing industrial research funding, especially as we prepare for the establishment of the Department in Athens. We are committed to actively pursuing research collaborations and funding opportunities with industrial partners. Initial discussions have already taken place in preparation for the Athens Campus. This includes seeking competitive funding through national and international innovation programs, establishing joint research projects, and developing industry-academia partnerships.

6.7 *“The EEC encourages to establish PhD-TA program and/or internal funding of the research activities such that faculty members have more time and support for research, establishing research collaboration nationally and internationally with other faculty and with industry. In a longer term this should become self-sustained through project development and attracting funding.”*

Response/Action:

The University already provides such a program. The description of the PhD-TA program is detailed in Chapter 12.25 of the university regulations (attached). In brief, doctoral students who have completed the University’s pedagogical training sessions for TA can apply for a teaching assistantship that covers, among others, student mentorship, coursework grading, and lab assistance and tutorial preparation. TAs are closely supervised by the doctoral student’s advisor. TAs are important in both preparing the doctoral student for future academic duties but also for reducing faculty workload.

6.8 *“The EEC encourages to establish support for enabling visiting researchers (both incoming and outgoing).”*

Response/Action:

We appreciate the EEC’s recommendation to enhance support for visiting researchers, both incoming and outgoing. The Department actively promotes academic mobility as a means of international research collaboration, professional development, and knowledge transfer, while strengthening the department’s global networks and academic visibility. We currently make use of the Erasmus+ programme to support faculty exchanges and visiting research stays, and we are committed to expanding these efforts. The University has a dedicated administrative office (the Erasmus office) which is responsible for promoting and supporting mobility (both faculty and staff). In the last 2 years we hosted 5 visiting faculty (inc.upcoming Fall 2025), and we had 3 outgoing faculty visits on the last year.

7. Resources

Positive comments made by the EEC:

N/A

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

7.1 “As part of the establishment of the extension of the Department at UNIC-Athens, as it entails yet another layer of bureaucracy between the faculty members and university management, it might be worth considering if a budget, under the authority of the director of the Department at UNIC-Athens, could be provisioned.”

Response/Action:

We take on board your suggestion that we will address to the University Council suggesting that similar benefits /financial incentives apply to the campus director of School/Director of Department/Programme coordinators

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“The project of creating a new university branch, and with that extensions of departments and programs, clearly is exciting — and the faculty and admin personnel that the EEC met with during the site visit were all enthusiastic about being part of the project, despite the complications, overhead, and disturbances that it will impose on their professional (and, in view of the transitioning / moving personnel for training new colleagues in Athens, also personal) lives.”*
- *“The faculty members from the Department at UNIC were committed to accompany and help their future colleagues at the extension of the Department at UNIC-Athens succeed — and the future faculty members at UNIC-Athens that we met were likewise optimistic.”*
- *“The two Bachelors programmes that the extension of the Department will deliver at UNIC-Athens already exist at UNIC, where they are well appreciated — by students, external stakeholders, and of course the staff.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

B.1. *“While 4–5 faculty members may appear sufficient to deliver number of classes immediately required the first year of the two BSc programmes, it is suboptimal for creating an academic and scientific environment for initiating a “research university branch”, and for providing a “boutique” and “deluxe” environment for the initial cohorts of students. It also does not allow to absorb incidents (for example, if a faculty member becoming incapacitated in some way) without impact on program quality.”*

Response/Action:

This was addressed in 5.3 above.

B.2. *“Likewise for the technical and administrative staff. As part of the scalability of the administrative processes and systems from UNIC to UNIC-Athens hinges on automation via IT systems, a single full-time IT officer is an unfortunate single point of failure, operationally. This, especially, since the branch will occupy brand new facilities with new IT infrastructure — and the inevitable teething problems.”*

Response/Action:

We are taking on board the recommendation of the EEC and we have forwarded the recommendation to the University Council and the Vice President of Human Resources for their consideration and actions.

B.3 *“The EEC notes that both the programmes, are in need of refreshing, in order to be comparable to European and international standards, both in terms of content, and form — and, to this end, notes that the Department processes for reviewing and updating the programs, and courses, would benefit from being formalised, and regular in place of ad-hoc.*



To that end, the external stakeholders expressed a desire to be more regularly involved in the program evolution, formalised through official memberships of the advisory board, and formalisation of periodic review meetings, for example on a 6-month schedule.”

Response/Action:

All mandatory and elective courses have been revised, and all course outlines are attached with this response. The course outlines includes updated learning outcomes, course content, weekly breakdown, assessment methods, and expected student workload. Regarding the second part of the comment, i.e. the suggestion for a formalized process for reviewing and updating the program, as well as formalization of the advisory board, these were thoroughly addressed in points 2.2 and 1.3 respectively.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Athena Stassopoulou	Professor and Head of Computer Science Department	
Dimitris Drikakis	Professor and Dean of the School of Sciences and Engineering	

Date: 07/07/2025

