

Doc. 300.3.1/1

Date: Date.

# External Evaluation Report

(Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation)

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Nicosia

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **School/Faculty:** School of Law

- **Department:** Department of Politics and Governance

- **Programme(s) of study - Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

**Programme 1 – BA**

**In Greek:**

Διεθνείς Σχέσεις και Ευρωπαϊκές Σπουδές (BA, 4 Έτη, 240 ECTS)

**In English:**

International Relations and European Studies, BA, 4 Years, 240 ECTS

**Language(s) of instruction:** English

**Programme 2 – MA**

**In Greek:**

Διεθνείς Σχέσεις και Σπουδές Ανατολικής Μεσογείου (MA, 3 Εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS)

**In English:**

International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA, 3 Semesters, 90 ECTS

**Language(s) of instruction:** English

**Programme 3 – PhD**

**In Greek:**

Διεθνείς Σχέσεις και Ευρωπαϊκές Σπουδές (PhD, 3 Years, 180 ECTS)

**In English:**

International Relations and European Studies, PhD, 3 years, 180 ECTS

**Language(s) of instruction:** English



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].



## A. Introduction

*This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.*

The online evaluation took place on Thursday 7 and Friday 8 January 2021. The departmental management team presented all three programs: The BA program in International Relations and European Studies, the MA program in International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, and the PhD program in International Relations and European Studies. The evaluation committee had informative and fruitful discussions in an open and constructive atmosphere with the senior management team of University of Nicosia, the Internal Evaluation Committee, the senior management team of the department, the program managers, teaching staff, students, and administrative/technical staff. Following the site visit, the evaluation committee mailed some follow up questions to a couple of staff members. The committee received very quick and informative answers. Prior to the site visit, the evaluation committee had access to a rich material, inclusive of the applications for accreditation.

The University and the Department is clearly committed to supporting students and their studies. There is a good team spirit. The three programs are populated with engaged staff and students, and there is a strong commitment to deliver a high level of quality in teaching. The university's infrastructure is impressive and clearly lives up to what can be demanded from a modern university.



## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>Peter Munk Christiansen</b>	Professor, Committee Chair	University of Aarhus
<b>Neophytos Loizides</b>	Professor, Committee Member	University of Kent
<b>András Bozóki</b>	Professor, Committee Member	Central European University
<b>Annita Tsolaki</b>	Student Committee Member	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

## C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*
- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
  - sub-areas*
  - standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
  - some questions that EEC may find useful.*
- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*
- *Under each assessment area it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

### **Findings**

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

### **Strengths**

*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*
- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding each programme of study as a whole.*
- **The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.**

## 1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

### Sub-areas

- 1.1. Policy for quality assurance
- 1.2. Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
- 1.3. Public information
- 1.4. Information management

### 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

#### Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

### 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

#### Standards

- *The programme of study:*
  - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
  - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
  - *benefits from external expertise*
  - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
  - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
  - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
  - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
  - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
  - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*

- *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

### 1.3 Public information

#### Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*
  - *qualification awarded*
  - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *pass rates*
  - *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

### 1.4 Information management

#### Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

## **Findings**

*In general the study programme and the study programme's design and development honours national and international demands.*

### **Findings for** International Relations and European Studies, BA

- This program is designed to develop theoretical and practical knowledge in the fields of International Relations and European studies. The program offers a wide range of introductory and specialized modules
- The program fits to the mainstream international BA standards and complies with the Qualifications framework for the European Higher Education (BA 4 years- 240 credits)
- This is a conventional (face-to-face) program. The number of students is less than 30 which allows for constructive teaching and dedicated time between instructors and students.
- The program is taught in English which is the second language of most students. Language criteria for admission are clearly defined.
- Students have the option to take courses on methodology but from other departments (see recommendation below)

### **Findings for** International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- This program is designed to develop theoretical and practical knowledge in the fields of International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies.
- The programme includes conventional and specific parts and elements
- The programme fits to the mainstream international MA programmes. The programme complies with the Qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.
- Altogether 90 credits make up the Master's level.
- The Curriculum contains compulsory courses (60 credits), and elective (30 credits)
- MA students can choose whether they attend the university for 1 year plus writing an MA Thesis or 1.5 year to attend three more courses (30 credits) without writing a Thesis.
- Relatively low tuition fee compared to other private universities.
- The programme offers both general International Relations topics and issues in Eastern Mediterranean Studies.
- The programme offers a Special Topics section (10 credits) to deal with academic topics of temporarily high interest.

### **Findings for** International Relations and European Studies, PhD

- The programme is established in 2013. So far, three students have completed their doctorate. Presently 10 students are enrolled in the programme.
- The programme in general conforms with some of the main stream international doctoral programmes. The programme complies with the Qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.
- The programme is administered by a permanent Departmental Doctorate Program Committee.
- Specific demands for the PhD application.

- Long study times is created by the possibility to be enrolled as part time PhD student. The maximum period of doctoral studies is 8 years.
- Two calls per year. The programme receives 10-15 applicants per semester. 0-3 is hired each semester.
- Tight screening of applicants. Enroll only students that the department has the capacity to advise
- Each student has two internal and on external advisors.
- Close monitoring from advisors.
- The programme have guidelines for writing the dissertation
- Relatively low tuition fee compared to other private universities.

### **Strengths**

*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

#### **Strengths for International Relations and European Studies, BA**

- Students have options to study for part of their degrees abroad mostly through the ERASMUS program.
- There is a strong focus on the region surrounding Cyprus/Eastern Mediterranean. This new emphasis also aligns better with the expertise of instructors and provides a unique niche area of knowledge transfer and student/faculty synergies.
- Costs are relatively low compared to other comparable private fee-paying universities.
- Basic writing skill training is reinforced and supported while partnerships with the surrounding society allow students to interact with policymakers including government bodies and NGOs.

#### **Strengths for International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA**

- The department has well-trained faculty who are able to perform their teaching obligations on high level.
- By offering Eastern Mediterranean Studies, the Department created comparative advantage to other universities. Therefore, it is able to combine standard, general approaches with the more particular area studies approach.
- The possibility of Special Topics make the offer more flexible and interesting by e.g. picking a new course on cybersecurity.

#### **Strengths for International Relations and European Studies, PhD**

- See also section 6 below
- Very well structured enrollment criteria and demands for the content of the application increases the chance of a successful doctorate.
- The use of external advisors increases alignment with mainstream demands for doctorates.
- Tight relations between doctoral candidates and their supervisors, in particular the internal advisors.

- The possibility of part-time PhD students allows a larger intake and allows students to work part time (and having an income) at the same time as having their studies enriched by real life working experiences.
- An attractive price/quality ratio.

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

#### **Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and European Studies, BA**

- Improving student's writing skills could receive more priority both in terms of employability and future career/personal achievement goals. We recommend more emphasis on assessments in student essays than exams. Amending national wide rules might be necessary in some occasions and should be an appropriate direction to be considered by the accreditation bodies.
- We recommend either a course or extra material to be added on gender and diversity broadly defined. We encourage more linkages within the university in this area as well as other areas of excellence at the University of Nicosia e.g. migration and digital innovations as well as practical education.
- A non-technical course on methods (not necessarily quantitative) could help students build practical skills. This module could also enable students to properly read new and complex texts in International Relations as published in the leading journals in the discipline as well as assess those critically.
- We recommend that more students (not just the top ones) are encouraged to write an independent thesis at the end of the fourth year.

#### **Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA**

- It could be a good idea to give greater weight to Master's Thesis in order to make the master program more in alignment with the international standard, even if the external job market puts a pressure on the university to avoid it.

#### **Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and European Studies, PhD**

- While part time doctoral studies has many advantages they also run the risk that the students spends too many years on the dissertation and will risk to be less state-of-the-art when it finally is submitted. Presently there is an 8 year time limit for submission of the

thesis. The EEC recommends that it is considered if this is too long a period, or alternatively introduces an article/paper based PhD, cf. below.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>		
		<i>BA</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>PhD</i>
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (**ESG 1.3**)

**Sub-areas**

- 2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
- 2.2 Practical training**
- 2.3 Student assessment**

**2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*

- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

## 2.2 Practical training

### Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

## 2.3 Student assessment

### Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for and method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*

- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- **Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?**
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- **Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?**
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

## **Findings**

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

### **Findings for** International Relations and European Studies, BA

- Only students present in Cyprus can take this face-to-face conventional program.
- The admission criteria requires a High school Leaving certificate 15 out of 20 for Cyprus or top 50 percent of class as well a good level of proficiency in English.
- Courses are available for students to improve their command of English in their first year.
- The course accreditation is fixed.

### **Findings for** International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- MA in IR and Eastern Mediterranean Studies can either be 1.5 year (= 3 semesters) or 1 year (= 2 semesters) plus writing the Master's Thesis (=1 semester).
- Both direct and distance learning are conducted. 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of students attend distance learning.
- The admission criteria include BA /BSc diploma, English proficiency (TOEFL or other language reliable language test), two letters of recommendation, and a personal statement of the candidate.
- The course accreditation is fixed (with the exception of Special Topics), like in the Bachelor programme.

### **Findings for** International Relations and European Studies, PhD

- Tight collaboration between doctoral students and advisors.
- There is not a fixed sum for doctoral candidates for conference attendance, data collection, stays abroad, course attendance, etc. but it is possible to apply for and be granted money for such purposes. The candidates interviewed did not express any unsatisfied needs in this respect.
- University resources in the form of libraries and other services are reported to be fine. The virtual tour de university supported this view
- The PhD education does not contain course participation. Candidates with special needs for advanced methodologies may attend an advanced course supplied at university level.
- The PhD thesis is defined as an anthology (preferably at a length of up to 80.000 words).
- There are no requirements for conference attendance.
- There is no requirement to spend time at foreign universities.
- There is no requirement to obtain teaching skills while enrolled as a PhD student. However, it is possible to teach as a teaching assistant and be remunerated by reduced tuition.
- An online platform underpins interaction between advisors and doctoral students,

## **Strengths**

*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

**Strengths for** International Relations and European Studies, BA

- Students are supported in developing strong communication and language skills. The learning environment of the university is conducive in this area as University of Nicosia is highly internationalised and diverse in its overall focus.
- Students are involved in research maximizing the benefits for themselves, early career instructors, and the university's research environment.
- Instructors provide comprehensive and constructive feedback to students.
- Students confirmed that instructors are accessible and highly professional.

**Strengths for** International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- Faculty are highly qualified and attentive to students.
- Students are highly satisfied with the assistance of their supervisors and instructors.
- Students received quality online teaching for several years, so the Covid pandemic did not cause much harm or disruption on teaching.

**Strengths for** International Relations and European Studies, PhD

- Close relationship between PhD candidates and supervisors.
- Availability of advanced methods course

**Areas of improvement and recommendations**

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

**Areas of improvement and recommendations for** International Relations and European Studies, BA

- Instructors are aware that there has been repetition among courses and worked hard to make improvements in this area.
- Colleagues are aware of each other's teaching material and have put considerable effort to avoid unnecessary replications.
- Course syllabuses might require continuous monitoring and communication among teaching staff. By encouraging students to follow independent research (via the thesis option or special topics), colleagues could avoid such repetition and offer more options beyond the conventional program

**Areas of improvement and recommendations for** International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- Composition of students is traditionally male-dominated because many alumni are employed by the military and public administration. A stronger equal opportunity policy is encouraged to make the gender proportion more balanced.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and European Studies,  
 PhD

- See section 6 below

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>		
		<i>BA</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>PhD</i>
<b>2.1</b>	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>2.2</b>	Practical training	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>2.3</b>	Student assessment	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant

### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

#### **Sub-areas**

- 3.1. Teaching staff recruitment and development**
- 3.2. Teaching staff number and status**
- 3.3. Synergies of teaching and research**

#### **3.1. Teaching staff recruitment and development**

##### Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

#### **3.2. Teaching staff number and status**

##### Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

#### **3.3. Synergies of teaching and research**

##### Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

### **Findings**

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

#### **Findings for** International Relations and European Studies, BA

- Instructors have received their PhDs in reputable universities. The academic background is very diverse including colleagues from the US, Germany, Greece and UK. Instructors have published considerably despite having major teaching and administrative constraints which they meet very well.
- Because of the university's emphasis on distant learning, faculty has adjusted very well both to online teaching as well as new themes offered through the module on special topics.

#### **Findings for** International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- Teaching faculty can apply for a sabbatical semester every 5 years – previously it was 7 years.
- Faculty being on sabbatical receive 50 % of their salaries.
- Teachers know about each other's courses, so they can substitute each other in case of necessity.

### Findings for International Relations and European Studies, PhD

See also section 6 below.

- A fine match between faculty and doctoral students is secured by strict screening at the time of enrollment.
- A broad range of the department's faculty is involved in PhD advice.
- Staff members can apply for sabbatical every 7<sup>th</sup> year to go to another university. Remunerated with part time salary.

### Strengths

*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

### Strengths for International Relations and European Studies, BA

- The regional focus on the Eastern Mediterranean allows faculty to combine teaching and research. Currently, besides a couple of regional Eastern Mediterranean MA programs, no other university to provide a comparable program
- Faculty are supported through internal grants, research leaves and opportunities for non-academic impact particularly at the policy level.
- Research leave policies have improved according to most EU university standards but research time allocated in general is not sufficient particularly for early career researchers.

### Strengths for International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- Committed faculty who take MA teaching seriously. Due to the specific requirements, they also offer professional courses.
- There are systematic training courses, and annual series of seminars in the field of diplomacy

### Strengths for International Relations and European Studies, PhD

- Broad engagement of the department's teaching staff in the doctoral programme.
- Close relations between doctoral students and advisors.
- The possibility to go to another (foreign) university for a semester promotes internationalization.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

### Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and European Studies, BA

- The amount of teaching and administration load is high compared to comparable institutions, particularly for junior academic staff.
- Early career researchers could receive more support (less teaching and more dedicated mentorship) in the first years and until they become permanent.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- Different teaching loads for different positions (3+3 and 2+2 courses per academic year). The committee recommends that junior scholars regularly get a reduced teaching load in order to enhance professional development.
- The EEC support the present Senate consideration of full salary compensation 1 semester every 3 years or 1 full year of paid leave every 6 years.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and European Studies, PhD

- No suggestions for improvement

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>		
		<i>BA</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>PhD</i>
<b>3.1</b>	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>3.2</b>	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>3.3</b>	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant

#### 4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

##### Sub-areas

- 4.1. Student admission, processes and criteria
- 4.2. Student progression
- 4.3. Student recognition
- 4.4. Student certification

##### 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

##### 4.2 Student progression

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

##### 4.3 Student recognition

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

#### 4.4 Student certification

##### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

##### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

##### Findings for International Relations and European Studies, BA

- Currently up to 30 students are admitted to this program.
- The program attracts both local and international students.
- The criteria for admission are clear with a double specialization offered in International Relations and European studies, electives across various departments and opportunities for additional specialization.

##### Findings for International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- Currently about 30-40 students are admitted to the MA programme every year.
- The university accepts the admission of foreign students.

##### Findings for International Relations and European Studies, PhD

- Well defined, clear and fair admission criteria.
- A PhD handbook is distributed to doctoral student upon enrollment.
- A 12.000 word research proposal must be submitted after 12 months of study.
- A Code of Practice and Regulations for Doctoral Programmes provides clear and specific guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the final doctoral dissertation.

- After submission of the thesis, the departments doctoral committee appoints a two-member Final Examination Committee, who is responsible for conducting the defense and examination: One external examiner and one internal examiner who has not supervised or assisted the student during his/her studies. The committee is chaired by an independent chair (usually the chair of the independent Chair (usually the DDPC Coordinator) with no voting rights.

### **Strengths**

*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

#### **Strengths for International Relations and European Studies, BA**

- The major strength of the program is its attractiveness to international students beyond Cyprus and the region. The program brings together an intentionally trained faculty with a diverse student body.

#### **Strengths for International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA**

- Opening up for foreign students is on the way. Teaching in English makes possible to accept foreign students beyond Greece.
- Students can participate in the Erasmus programs, plus there are special possibilities for them to spend some months or a semester in Greece, Malta or North Macedonia.

#### **Strengths for International Relations and European Studies, PhD**

- Well regulated admission criteria and well regulated standards for appointing advisors, examination committee.
- The existence of a PhD-handbook witnesses of a well ordered program

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

#### **Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and European Studies, BA**

- The program could build further on its strengths by providing more emphasis on gender studies (see above)
- The students could be encouraged to acquire hard skills also certified externally (e.g. languages but also in skill areas such as mediations as in many German universities)

#### **Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA**

- Admissions criteria generally correspond to the international standards. An idea for improvement could be to request the submission of a “sample writing” in order to help faculty to decide about admissions. Short personal statements are usually not enough to judge the (potential) academic writing skills of the applicant.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and European Studies, PhD

- A doctoral student must submit a research proposal after 12 months of study at the size of around 10.000 word. The EEC recommends that this policy is reconsidered: It is well known that many – probably most – PhD students ends up doing a project that is significantly different from the original project idea. This is no problem and in good accordance with the core of the academic production process that has to allow for trials and errors, reconsiderations etc. However, allowing 12 months for the research proposal to come into being risks leaving too many decisions to be made at a late point of time. The EEC therefore recommends to reconsider whether the 12 month period should be reduced to 6 or 9 months or – alternatively – that there are some procedures to secure that the work with the proposal is going well.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>		
		<i>BA</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>PhD</i>
<b>4.1</b>	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>4.2</b>	Student progression	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>4.3</b>	Student recognition	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>4.4</b>	Student certification	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant

## 5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

### Sub-areas

#### 5.1. Teaching and Learning resources

#### 5.2. Physical resources

#### 5.3. Human support resources

#### 5.4. Student support

### 5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

#### Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

### 5.2 Physical resources

#### Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

### 5.3 Human support resources

#### Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

## 5.4 Student support

### Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

## **Findings**

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

### **Findings for** International Relations and European Studies, BA

- Monitoring of Students mechanisms are present aiming to identify those facing challenges at the beginning of the semester and to support them accordingly. Counselling services are available.
- The University's physical infrastructure is exceptional. The University of Nicosia combines new buildings with exceptional investments in digital innovations and technologies for learning.
- The University uses moodle for the delivery of modules and a number of online platforms for communicating with students. The faculty are exceptionally familiar with new digital technologies.

### **Findings for** International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- The University is well equipped technically, the library is available for the evenings and weekends.
- Special devices help online teaching and conferences (Not only Zoom and Teams but Webex as well).
- The IT department is resourceful and well organized to take care of students' materials.

### **Findings for** International Relations and European Studies, PhD

- See also section 6 below.
- The doctoral students expressed great satisfaction with their study conditions inclusive of library access, financial support for conference participation etc.
- The small number of doctoral students makes it possible to establish very close relations with the students and thus accommodate their preferences.

## **Strengths**

*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

### **Strengths for** International Relations and European Studies, BA

- The University's strong emphasis on internationalization including but not limited to Erasmus programs offers students additional opportunities for advancing their studies abroad. Likewise, the University of Nicosia is a magnet for international students choosing Cyprus for their own exchange programs.
- There is a highly professional culture that underpins learning at the University of Nicosia. The material for the modules is accessible on time as well as students know in advance the expectations, assignment requirements and deadlines.



- Students benefit from the extensive engagement of faculty members with policymakers. They are offered multiple opportunities for conference attendance on timely events as well as internship opportunities e.g. in the government and NGOs (e.g. FES)

#### Strengths for International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- High level of technical knowledge, preparedness, useful available devices for both on-site and online teaching.
- Faculty are available for students outside class and office hours.

#### Strengths for International Relations and European Studies, PhD

- Numerically small programme makes close relations between the department and the doctoral students possible.
- Well-equipped university in terms of infrastructure

#### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and European Studies, BA

- Students could receive more support on independent projects. This could take the form of either a dissertation project broadly extended or long essay courses.
- Currently when students appeal for a grade, informal and formal processes are in place. Those are consistent with the set standards and similar to the US system but it might be useful to consider including an external examiner from another department or university for more complicated cases.
- An introduction of a dedicated tutor for each student is currently a very common procedure across European universities. Adopting this system will add to the attractiveness of the BA program particularly among international students. Such provision will enhance standards but it will require bringing teaching loads down for existing staff. Another option is for older students to serve as tutors to first year students. This will offer students better chances to socialize and integrate not least during COVID and post-COVID times.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations for International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, MA

- If we understand “student support” broadly and includes alumnis students, we see room for improvement. This can include not only the alumni club, which exists, but also a more lively interaction between the alumni and the university.

- That might also include campaigns among alumni to raise money for new students or improving the conditions in other respect.
- The special composition of the student body – most of them continue their career in the military or in the public administration and many of them might work besides their studies – possibly explains this rate. From this perspective a completion rate in MA studies on 80% is acceptable. It may also explain that 40% of MA students need one more semester to complete their Master Degree.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD

- No recommendations, however see section 6 below

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>		
		<i>BA</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>PhD</i>
<b>5.1</b>	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>5.2</b>	Physical resources	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>5.3</b>	Human support resources	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
<b>5.4</b>	Student support	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant

## 6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

### **Sub-areas**

#### **6.1. Selection criteria and requirements**

#### **6.2. Proposal and dissertation**

#### **6.3. Supervision and committees**

### **6.1 Selection criteria and requirements**

#### **Standards**

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
  - *the examinations*
  - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
  - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

### **6.2 Proposal and dissertation**

#### **Standards**

- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
  - *the chapters that are contained*
  - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
  - *the minimum word limit*
  - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

### 6.3 Supervision and committees

#### Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*
  - *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - *support for writing research papers*
  - *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?*

#### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

- As mentioned above, a strict admission procedure secures the selection of good students with a high probability of completion success.
- The program allows part time doctoral studies.
- A thesis cannot be submitted before three years of study. As a number of the doctoral students have part time job, some will submit significantly later than 3 years after enrolment. There is a maximum period of 8 years for submission of the thesis.
- A thesis can only be submitted as a monograph (preferably a maximum of 80.000 words).
- The format of the thesis is well defined.
- There are no course requirements, no teaching obligations, and no requirements for research stays abroad or for conference attendance.
- There are clear procedures for the formation of an advisory committee as well as for an examination committee.
- There are requirements of at least one meeting per semester between doctoral students and their advisors, but an online platform allows much more frequent interaction.
- Department faculty must advise a maximum of 5 PhD students.

- The possibility of part time doctoral studies increases the societal relevance of doctoral studies

Strengths

*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

- Small program with close relations between department and doctoral students.
- Well regulated programme from enrolment to degree granting.
- Very engaged teaching staff.
- Part time studies allows for a boarder intake of doctoral students and increases possible societal impact of doctoral studies.
- A competitive tuition/quality rate.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

- Consider whether a maximum of 8 years for thesis submission is too long. The risk is that the thesis is surpassed by other developments within the field.
- Consider to introduce a thesis based on papers/articles. This is a well-defined standard in many countries, and can be done in many different ways. It can increase the market value of candidates on the academic job market if candidates have proved able to publish in good journals. A paper/article based model could also be a good possibility for part time students so that results can be distributed faster and the risk of the thesis being outside state-of-the-art demands. A paper/article model may also justify the 8 year limit.
- Consider whether 1 year for the research proposal is too long or introduce some milestones during the first year.
- Consider a mandatory introduction to research integrity, inclusive of data management in the light of how important research integrity and data management have become.
- Consider to somehow induce full time doctoral students to go abroad for a period of time during their study.
- Consider to make it a demand that doctoral students should participate in at least one international conference with paper presentation.

**Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:**

Sub-areas		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Compliant



<b>6.2</b>	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
<b>6.3</b>	Supervision and committees	Compliant



## D. Conclusions and final remarks

*Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks, which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of each programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.*

The committee was impressed by the programs provided by the department of Politics and Governance, University of Nicosia, and the dedication shown by staff to supporting the student learning experience. For all three programs there is a clear sense of focus and commitment. The department utilizes its small size to create tight relations between teaching staff and students at all levels. As seen from the committee the department “walk the talk” when it comes to committing itself to quality teaching and the creation of a secure, and yet challenging learning environment.

The committee is of the overall opinion that the programs come with good design and a commitment to secure quality by standard operating procedures as well as personal engagement in teaching and students. Teaching programs are moving targets in dialogue with the surrounding society and should always be open to discussions and realignments. It is from this philosophy that the committee above has noted aspects of the program to be considered in order to develop and improve the existing already well-functioning programs.



**E. Signatures of the EEC**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Peter Munk Christiansen	
Neophytos Loizides	
András Bozóki	
Annita Solaki	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

**Date:** Click to enter date

