



Doc. 300.2.2

# Institution Response (Institutional Evaluation)

Date: 7 September 2023

- Higher Education Institution:  
Cyprus University of Technology
- Town: Paphos
- Institution Status: New Institution (branch)

**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.300.2.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the Institution in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, in the section building facilities, student welfare services, infrastructure, the HEI must respond on the comments and scoring of the EEC.*
- *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. 300.2.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

## **BUILDING FACILITIES - STUDENT WELFARE SERVICES - INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **1. Building facilities**

#### **1.1 Plans and licenses**

We note the comments and the confidence of the EEC that all licenses will be issued on time. We reassure the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education that all licenses will be in place prior to the start of academic term on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September.

#### **1.2 Other facilities**

No comments by EEC

### **2. Student welfare services**

EEC Comment: “it is observed (through the website and social media), that during the last academic years, the provision of educational seminars, presentations and fairs with employers has been limited. It is noted that the recent hiring of a specialized officer for the Career Office will allow the offering of seminars for skills development, as well as the organisation of initiatives that bring the students in connection with the labour market (corporate presentations, fairs etc).”

HEI Response: The organizing of face to face seminars, presentations and fairs was indeed effected by the COVID pandemic the last 3 years. In addition the University had no dedicated Career Office personnel during the same period. Despite that, a number of virtual seminars and presentations were organized and were well attended. The EEC correctly notes that a new Career Officer is in place since July 2022 and significant improvement in this direction is noted. For example in February 2023 the University through its Career office organized a big face to face Career fair with a large number of booths by 85 companies and organizations. The event was well attended by students and graduates and it was opened by the Minister of Labour and the university leadership.

EEC Comment: “The number of outgoing and incoming students needs to be increased and the University should further encourage mobility through offering some English-taught courses per Department/Program of Studies, providing housing facilities and fostering a culture of student mobility for studies and placement.”

HEI Response: The Erasmus and other types of student mobility were heavily effected by COVID pandemic during the last few years. Despite this, the University has made every effort to utilize electronic means for facilitating virtual mobilities. Recently our “Learning Network” has developed its own Blended Mobility methodology where on the level of a whole class the mobility is split in two (a) short virtual mobilities and (b) shorter face to face mobilities happen. This makes it possible for us to give the opportunity to mobility to a larger number of students. A number of courses have, in the last few months, made use of this methodology increasing dramatically our mobility numbers. This is especially useful under courses offered by partners of our European University of Technology alliance.



By University regulation departments are allowed and encouraged to offer 5 courses in English per program of studies. Currently due to legal restrictions state universities can not offer whole programs in any other language than Greek. CUT is pressuring for a change to this restriction and in collaboration with other members of the European University of Technology alliance is planning to offer in the near future whole programs in English.

### 3. Infrastructure

No comments by EEC

## 1. Institution's Academic Profile and Orientation

### Sub-Areas

#### 1.1 Mission and strategic planning

#### 1.2 Connecting with society

#### 1.3 Development processes

EEC Comments: (a) "One gap is not having external advisory boards at a department/programme level." (b) "it could improve its mechanism of stakeholder engagement" (c) "It would be useful to have more networking events for current students and Alumni. Much more good could be done with respect to community engagement and how the institution can have a positive impact on society at large." (d) Recruitment processes are adequate, with gaps on being pro-active to attract female staff; the ratio of female to male academic staff is on the lower side. When recruiting, emphasis is on research; more effort should be placed with regards to insuring excellence in teaching as well.

HEI Response: Regarding external advisory boards it should be noted that all new departments of the university are formed through first setting up an academic advisory boards which helped in the initial drafting of the new programs of study. The advisory boards in the process become less active as the academic departments become autonomous and take over the running of the courses. But, all departments maintain some form of informal advisory bodies. For example a new of new programs have made use through university funding to get advise from experts for feasibility studies and any other form of preparation something that is strongly requested by the government bodies. Close relations with stakeholders are also developed through practical training of students, research and other forms of collaborations which feed back to the department for any improvements for the course offerings and other departmental activities. The academic which will operate under this school by law will setup a permanent advisory board with specific stakeholders as dictated by the parliament decision. Furthermore, the university will consider strongly the possibility of re-establishing advisory boards for schools or other entities of the university when need appears. Informal engagement of stakeholders through deliberations is though embedded in all our practises.

We continuously try to improve our engagement with the community and the society some examples include:

- The University participates through the School of Health Sciences in the consultation process with the Ministry of Health and other state bodies for the approval of a bill for the establishment of university clinics. Creation of a Model Health Centre at the premises of the Old Hospital of Limassol through the co-location of services of the Ministry of Health, the State Health Services Organisation and the School of Health Sciences of the Cyprus University of Technology. The Health Center will give the opportunity of clinical practice to nursing students, but also rehabilitation (speech therapy), cooperation of students and health professionals and support of health professionals. In addition, cooperation with the University can create the possibility of additional services with the participation and supervision of health professionals of the departments.
- Promotion of collaborations with state bodies, local authorities and other institutional bodies for the joint development of educational programs, digital collections, research project proposals, training programs and lifelong learning.

- Signing of a Cooperation Protocol with the Community of Agios Theodoros Pitsilias, which provides, inter alia, for the concession of the house of the leading Cypriot painter and father of contemporary Cypriot art, Adamantios Diamantis. The Protocol also provides for the preservation and utilization of the house of Adamantios Diamantis by the University, with the aim of creating an International Research Center "Adamantios Diamantis".
- Signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Cyprus University of Technology and the Community Council of Pachna, for the utilization of the premises of the Pachna SPE by the School of Health of CUT.
- The Network for the Enhancement and Development of Learning has implemented more than ten seminars and workshops by distinguished guest speakers from industry, in which topics of entrepreneurship, research, innovation, information literacy and communication, start-up development as well as academic and professional skills were developed.
- From 2020 until the end of May 2023, more than 75 agreements-protocols of cooperation have been signed with various bodies (private companies, public and semi-governmental organizations). Also, during the same period, joint cultural events have been held with Municipalities and other bodies, which promoted the common visions of the State and the University.
- Establishment of the Open University Lectures of CUT in the districts of Famagusta and Pafos with the aim of providing new knowledge, developing skills and cultivating free thinking on a wide range of topics of local interest.
- The establishment of a Sommelier academy by the specific school under evaluation at the village of Vouni is in process with involvement of the village council.

The law of the University is strict and restrictive and does not allow discrimination for or against any sex. In all notices for new jobs, the following provisions are included:

It is noted that:

- CUT applies an equal opportunities policy in the context of recruitment and subsequent professional career stages and encourages people of all genders to apply for all levels of staffing of Academic and Administrative Staff.
- The University makes no distinction in relation to race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, age, physical ability, marital status, and sexual orientation.

We have established a Senatorial Committee for Equality. The main purpose of the Committee is to promote issues of equality, diversity, inclusion and inclusion, acceptance, understanding and appreciation of diversity, to combat prejudices, discrimination and inequalities that are reproduced due to overt and non-visible characteristics (physiological/physical, social/lifestyle, cognitive) of one's identity that coexist with gender - such as age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, appearance, social class, religion, beliefs, nationality, colour, country of origin, personality, way of thinking, experiences – to make the University an inclusive, positive, safe, empowering and fair work and learning environment, which provides equal opportunities and supports all individuals – including underrepresented – for their professional and personal development.

In the link <https://www.cut.ac.cy/university/administration/senate/senate-committees/epitropiisotitas/> you can see all the actions developed by the University on equality issues.

## 2. Quality Assurance

### Sub-Areas

#### **2.1 System and quality assurance strategy**

#### **2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study**

EEC Comments: (a) “It would be very helpful if there were more small classrooms for interactive teaching and learning. Also, more effort can be placed with regards to student evaluations (in-class versus online, peer review). (b) Also to incentivize faculty more emphasis on teaching excellence for hiring and promotion would be most welcome. (c) With regards to Phd students, it was not clear how students who had serious concerns about their position with their supervisors can address and resolve their concerns. More formal and better articulated processes would be welcome.”

HEI Answers: In 2020 the University established the “Learning Network”. The Learning Network brings together expertise on pedagogy across the University by bringing together Academics, Administrative staff and students who have knowledge and expertise in these domains. The Learning Network regularly offers free and open to the community seminars on all aspects of Learning and Teaching including styles of delivery (online, blended, face to face), modes of assessment (peer reviewed, classic and novel methodologies), pedagogical theories and practices (eg. Problem Based Learning, Behaviour models, Constructionist models) etc. Furthermore the Learning Network is responsible for advising the leadership in regards to learning spaces (interactive and technology enhanced).

The facilities in Paphos are impressive as well noted by EEC. The architecture of the building takes into account the open spaces (internal and external) and the building was designed and build in ways that, especially due to the Cyprus weather, will maximize the use of external open spaces for learning. One open space amphitheatre was built but we expect that the rest of the open spaces in front and behind the building will be fully utilized for formal and informal learning. Similar practises have been implemented by CUT in Limassol including an open space for socializing and social learning by students in the yard of the central library. The suggestion for the provision of more plug-ins in classrooms is well received and we will make sure plug-in stations are setup across campus, indoors and outdoors. Regarding the need to have the cafeteria open as soon as possible, we would like to re-assure the EEC that every effort will be placed to make that happen.

In article 26 of University’s Law refers in particular to the qualifications of teaching and research staff. The provision of evidence of excellence in university teaching is one of the main criteria for the election and promotion of a new and existing academic members and we believe that the Selection Committees take this very seriously when evaluating candidates and are required to comment on this in their evaluation report.

The Senate approved the introduction of the Awards for Outstanding University Teaching. The Outstanding University Teaching Awards encourage the development of original, quality and effective teaching methods. Furthermore the Learning Network has announced for the first time this year and selected around 10 small projects by academics on Teaching Quality and good practises which are currently running.

Regarding the protection of Student complains, the University has pioneered in setting recently a Student Ombudsman office. CUT is the first to introduce such an office. the Student Ombudsman investigates cases,



ex officio or following a student's report and mediates with the relevant bodies of the University for their resolution.

The purpose of the Student Ombudsman is the mediation between students and academic or administrative services of the University, the observance of legality in the context of academic freedom, the confrontation of abuse of power phenomena and any kind of harassment against students.

This Student Ombudsman aims to cultivate a culture of positive communication among the members of our university community and to transform possible disagreements into a creative synthesis of opinions, without conflicts. At the same time, it helps defend the educational rights of our students.

The following link has detailed information on the student Ombudsman policy [https://www.cut.ac.cy/digitalAssets/100/100801\\_100sunigoros\\_foititi.pdf](https://www.cut.ac.cy/digitalAssets/100/100801_100sunigoros_foititi.pdf), as approved by the Senate and the Internal Quality Committee and following international practices.



### 3. Administration

EEC Comments: “The decision-making processes of the institution could be improved by actively involving members of the teaching and administrative staff and students.”

HEI Answers: The governance of the University is defined by the CUT Law and Regulations as approved by the Cyprus Parliament. CUT follows fully and with great care the structures of governance defined in its law and regulations. Students and Staff actively participate in decision making e.g. all academic staff participate as voting members in the department council, 30% of the department council is student representatives with a voting right. Others (e.g. teaching staff, administration) can (and are) be invited to participate in the discussion of specific issues.



## 4. Learning and Teaching

### Sub-Areas

#### 4.1 Planning the programmes of study

#### 4.2 Organisation of teaching

EEC Comments: (a) “However, other stakeholders (e.g., employers) are not actively involved on the programmes’ review and evaluation.” (b) “suggests the need for more interactive small classroom spaces for the purposes of the Entrepreneurship and Digital Business / Management programmes.”

HEI Answers: The issue of stakeholders involvement has been answered in section 1 and the use of more collaborative spaces was addressed in our answers in section 2



## 5. Teaching Staff

EEC Comments: (a) “In terms of visiting professor, there is a gap. Such professors can enrich programmes and research. Efforts to improve this area would be welcome.”

CUT Answers: Since 2012, due to the economic recession in Cyprus, the Visiting Professor statue, has been substituted with Short Term Professors. With the recovery of the economy and on the basis of its Strategic Planning, the university will allocate relevant funding to Visiting Professor positions.



## 6. Research

EEC Comments: “It is unclear how and the extent the Cyprus University of Technology, Pafos, ”...ensures that research results are integrated into teaching and, to the extent applicable, promotes and implements a policy of transferring know-how to society and the production sector.” Given the excellence elsewhere in research and importance of community to the University this gap can and should be addressed.”

HEI Answers: This issues are well covered in the seminars to academics that the Learning Network offers. The seminars provide guidance and examples of how Research can be integrated into teaching by academic staff. This is done extensively in the courses offered at the School in Pafos through guest presentations by researches and examples from externally funded projects. In addition students are often hired to work on parts of research projects incorporating that knowledge into their studies. Finally, all students conduct a thesis that is required to have a research component. Research Methodologies are also taught as part of the program of studies.



## 7. Resources

EEC comments: “The University, however, should probably expend more resources and energy to diversify its income sources given possible changes and reversals in government policy. From our conversations during the site visit the university appears to be moving in this direction; perhaps such diversification can be more explicitly articulated.”

HEI Answer: The University is drafting a central policy regarding securing donations and other forms of income.



## **B. Conclusions and Final Remarks**

First we would like to thank the EEC for its visit, interest and care regarding our campus in Paphos. The EEC devoted substantial time to explore the spaces, and provided a healthy atmosphere for discussion and sharing of experiences between the EEC and the HEI representatives.

We thank the EEC for the very positive comments about the work we are doing, this gives us strength to continue and where necessary further improve our practises.

In our response we address all the comments raised by the EEC as they appear in every section of their report.

Regarding the final list of comments we feel we have address all comments in the report above.



## D. Higher Education Institution Academic Representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Panayiotis Zaphiris</b>	Rector	
Fullname	Position	
Fullname	Position	
Fullname	Position	
Fullname	Position	
Fullname	Position	

**Date:** 7 September 2023



