

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date.

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**

The Cyprus Institute

- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Μάστερ στις Περιβαλλοντικές Επιστήμες
Master in Environmental Sciences
(1 year, 90 ECTS, Master of Science (MSc)/
1.5 year, 120 ECTS, Master of Philosophy (MPhil))

In English:

Master's in Environmental Sciences

- **Language(s) of instruction: English**
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



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.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 2nd column of each table, the HEI must respond on the following:*
 - *the areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The institution should respond to the EEC comments, in the designated area next each comment. The comments of the EEC should be copied from the EEC report **without any interference** in the content.*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on separate document(s). Each document should be in *.pdf format and named as annex1, annex2, etc.*

1. Study programme and study programme’s design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>● The renewed MSc/MPhil programme seems to have been developed mostly driven by securing that the research staff at Cyl can provide their input on their fields of expertise rather than developing a programme that starts from a general description (problem statement, programme objectives, learning outcomes etc.). Design of the programme in terms of courses, activities, assessment strategies, etc., should mostly rely on selecting those faculty staff members with the specific research- and, most importantly academic teaching expertise. The EEC recommends shifting focus from fitting staff and their research areas into the MSc/MPhil programme, to designing the programme itself first and then aligning individual staff expertise through taught courses.</p>	<p><i>We want to sincerely thank the EEC for their constructive comments. We have restated the definition and general description of the MSc/MPhil program to convey better the roles of the atmosphere, water and energy (the scientific domains of the three Tracks) under the theme of the environment and energy and renamed the program to Masters in Environmental and Energy Sciences (following the EEC’s recommendation and as detailed in our reply in Conclusions). We will incorporate the following text in the respective parts of the programs handbook, brochures and web-page, regarding the Program’s purpose and objectives:</i></p> <p><i>“The Master’s degree in Environmental and Energy Sciences with three specialization Tracks in Meteorology and Atmospheric Sciences, Water Sciences, and Sustainable Energy, aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions in the environment, involving atmosphere, climate, water resources, and energy systems.</i></p> <p><i>The program’s structure allows students to explore the interconnections between these three specializations, enabling them to develop holistic approaches to addressing complex environmental challenges. The program includes a combination of track-specific core courses and electives, allowing students to tailor their studies to their specific interests and career</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p><i>goals. Coursework is complemented by the research project and opportunities for hands-on learning through field work, laboratory experiments, and internships. Graduates will be prepared for careers in environmental consulting, government agencies, research institutions, and private companies working on air quality, meteorology and climate, water resources and renewable energy, contributing to the development of sustainable solutions for a changing world".</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This process of redesigning the programme could also benefit from having more meetings with the faculty staff on jointly discussing and collaborating on the redesign of the programme. We specifically mention this based on discussions with the faculty staff members indicating that there has been one meeting that has resulted in the current proposed revised set-up of the programme. 	<p><i>After receiving the EEC report and in preparation for the program revision addressing the EEC's recommendations, an online consultation (via email) among the Faculty has taken place where input and feedback has been expressed and in three meetings (with physical and online participation) the Faculty members have discussed and finalized the revised program structure.</i></p> <p><i>Information on the meetings/discussions of the faculty can be found in Annex 1.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EEC observed that with the redesign of the programme, which initially had a focus on atmospheric sciences, into a broader programme on environmental sciences, that the dual aim of (1) training students for practical weather service careers, and (2) introducing students into the fundamental of atmospheric dynamics and climate, seems to complicate a more optimal redesign of the programme. Why introduce a student interested in pursuing a career in weather services into the water cycle and sustainable energy or vice versa? There 	<p><i>With all due respect to the EEC's authority and expert judgment, we would like to point out that the above comment about the "dual aim" may be more a result of an unintended emphasis on the atmospheric dynamics component in the Evaluation PowerPoint presentation by the program coordinator (on which, the EEC has mostly relied for information) and less due to prominence of atmospheric dynamics in the actual program content. Nevertheless, we have taken this into account and incorporated pertinent changes in the program's general description and aims (see reply to previous point), as well as modifying titles</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>might be obvious reasons to do so (predictions on maximising solar and wind energy production) but these important motivations for the restructuring of the programme should be evident in the programmes general description, objective, learning outcomes and even at a higher level of detail, the course descriptions. Here, the EEC wishes to note that they might have missed receiving in weather services into the water cycle and sustainable energy or vice versa? There might be obvious reasons to do so (predictions on maximising solar and wind energy production) but these important motivations for the restructuring of the programme should be evident in the programmes general description, objective, learning outcomes and even at a higher level of detail, the course descriptions. Here, the EEC wishes to note that they might have missed receiving some essential information on the redesigned programme; the overall programme description (and learning outcomes).</p>	<p><i>(and where relevant, lecture content, objectives and learning outcomes) of the core courses as detailed below. This removes any confusion and ensures a coherent learning path through both exposure to foundational knowledge on atmosphere, water and energy as well as specialization (via the respective electives) in these three Tracks.</i></p> <p><i>Based on the above rationale, modifications in the Core (foundational) courses of the Autumn Semester were applied as follows (no changes in course code):</i></p> <p><i>ES 403 “Fundamentals of Atmosphere and Climate” changed to “Atmospheric Science”</i></p> <p><i>ES 408 “Dynamic Meteorology” changed to “Meteorology and Climate”</i></p> <p><i>The Atmospheric Science course (ES403) now focuses on the fundamental physical and chemical processes in the atmosphere, including directly connected basics on climate change (e.g. atmospheric radiation and the greenhouse effect), see Annex 2. The Meteorology and Climate course (ES408) now connects atmospheric dynamics with key climate manifestations (for example, the control of major surface climate features by atmospheric circulation), see Annex 3. Also, the elective course Intelligent Monitoring and Control Systems (ES422) was removed, in order to increase cohesion of the remaining electives in the Sustainable Energy Track with the Environmental and Energy Sciences program theme.</i></p>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regarding the previously indicated areas of improvements with respect to the redesign of the MSc/MPhil programme, we recommend reviewing the current proposed set-up, as described in Conclusions. 	<p><i>We have addressed this in our replies to the previous points above as well in Conclusions, page 22-23.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Also given that the redesign of the MSc/MPhil programme is also aiming to involve recently hired faculty staff members in the teaching activities at Cyl. It seems that for some of these new faculty staff members, being introduced into academic teaching, that they get involved also through mentorship by other senior staff members with demonstrated teaching skills and/or educational training programme on 'teaching in higher education' (train-the trainers). 	<p><i>Taking into consideration the advice of the EEC, we have explored different options for providing our teaching staff with pedagogical and didactic training and several opportunities for training and development will be available from the next academic year.</i></p> <p><i>The most representative activity towards this direction that is already planned for Fall 2024, is the organization of a course on "Teaching in Higher Education: Pedagogical Principles and Hands-on Applications" which will be offered to all Cyl faculty. The course has been designed and submitted to HRDA and has already received approved to be offered in the second half of 2024.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Although the assessment criteria are explicitly outlined in the Course Handbook, they may also encompass a broader foundation in physical sciences, including physics, biology, chemistry, etc., rather than being exclusively confined to natural sciences, mathematics, and engineering.</p>	<p><i>We understand that at this point the EEC refers to the admission criteria and the required background that applicants must have (based on the comments in the Conclusion section also).</i></p> <p><i>Taking into consideration the suggestion of the EEC, the admission criteria have been modified to explicitly list the various disciplines of physical sciences, which is a subset of natural sciences (and which are also further clarified by explicitly naming them). This results to a numerous list of disciplines that make it easier for the applicant to identify with the program's admission requirements regarding degree qualification background.</i></p> <p><i>Taking into consideration the suggestion of the EEC, the admission criteria have been modified to include a broader foundation in physical sciences as shown in Annex 4.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To enhance the programme's competitiveness, the introduction of a part-time mode is recommended, along with the provision of an online option for the theoretical components of the courses. 	<p><i>We absolutely understand the advise of the EEC to introduce a part-time mode of delivery of the program as this could serve multiple purposes: support the increase in the student cohort and provide opportunities for individuals with full-time jobs. This expansion can enhance the programme's outreach and impact. For this reason, a part-time mode design of the program is currently in progress, and will soon be submitted to CYQAA for approval.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the institute's emphasis on research, it is proposed that the distribution of weightage between final examinations and research activities, such as literature reviews, projects, and presentations, be re-evaluated. 	<p><i>The four Core courses in the Autumn Semester (ES403, ES404, ES405, ES408), as the ones providing the foundational knowledge of the respective components of Environmental and Energy Sciences, require assessment through Final Exams (75% weight) and Coursework/Assignments (25%). This ratio has been now modified to be the same across all four Core courses. The remaining elective courses in the Spring Semester, include a few (ES409, ES412, ES413, EAS513, EAS515) that require a combination of Final Exam (75%) and Coursework (25%). The remaining courses (ES416, ES418, EAS522, ES425) require a combination between Coursework (40%) and Project/Presentations (60%) and this ratio has been now modified to be the same across all four.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EEC advocates for a closer collaboration between teaching and administrative personnel to offer students not only academic pathways but also alternatives for industrial employment. Establishing a dedicated career center is also deemed advisable. 	<p><i>We thank the EEC for the fruitful comments on creating closer bonds of our school with the industry. Having this task as our priority, the program has already included a mandatory internship which enforces the connection with industry.</i></p> <p><i>Additionally, the Graduate School plans to collaborate closely with the Innovation Office of Cyl on developing a strategic plan to connect students with Cyl's extensive network of industrial partners. This will involve introducing students to potential employers through organized events, arranging campus interviews, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Although we take very seriously the recommendation of the EEC to offer career counseling services to our</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



	<p><i>students, at the moment establishing a dedicated unit is not within the strategic plan of the Graduate School based on the low number of students. Currently, our students receive career advice from their supervisors and the extended faculty body that are very well acquainted with the market needs and career pathways in their field. However, in the long term and when student numbers increase a Career Counseling Office will certainly be established at the Graduate School.</i></p>	
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3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main area for improvement, especially anticipating that the renewed MSc/MPhil programme will attract in future more students, appears to be a more systematic training of the faculty staff in academic teaching skills. It is imperative that staff have access to training opportunities in teaching pedagogy to refine their instructional methods. While many staff members possess extensive research experience and may have received training earlier in their careers, there is currently a lack of provision for ongoing professional development, particularly for new staff. 	<p><i>As explained above, taking into consideration the advice of the EEC, we have explored different options for providing our teaching staff with pedagogical and didactic training and several opportunities for systematic training and development will be available from the next academic year in order for our faculty to stay up-to-date with teaching pedagogies and refine their instructional methods.</i></p> <p><i>As explained above, the most representative activity towards this direction that is already planned for Fall 2024, is the organization of a course on “Teaching in Higher Education: Pedagogical Principles and Hands-on Applications” which will be offered to all Cyl faculty. The course has been designed and submitted to HRDA and has already received approved to be offered in the second half of 2024.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring of the new staff members on their introduction in teaching at Cyl by those colleagues having an academic education record appears to be already done also as part also 	<p><i>As explained above, the training of our faculty, especially of the new ones, will be integrated as standard practice in the procedures of the Graduate School. We have already explored and identified different options that can serve best this</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>of the revision of the MSc/MPhil programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EEC recommends further use of internal and external opportunities for training on academic education since this would not only enable staff to adopt new techniques and approaches in their teaching but also enhance the overall student experience. This need becomes more pronounced as the student cohort will indeed expand in future, benefiting not only this particular MSc/MPhil programme but also similar programmes across Cyl. Potential avenues for such training include exploring opportunities within the higher education sector in Cyprus, online courses offered by institutions in Europe or the UK (such as those provided by Higher Education Institute in the UK), or even considering the recruitment of experts in the field who could provide support and training for teaching programmes institute-wide, including initial training for PhD students. 	<p><i>purpose and will be made available to our faculty members from the next Academic Year.</i></p> <p><i>As explained above, the most representative activity towards this direction that is already planned for Fall 2024, is the organization of a course on “Teaching in Higher Education: Pedagogical Principles and Hands-on Applications” which will be offered to all Cyl faculty. The course has been designed and submitted to HRDA and has already received approved to be offered in the second half of 2024.</i></p>	
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
 (ESG 1.4)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EEC strongly recommends intensifying efforts to enhance the visibility of the master's programme, extending its reach beyond the local community to international markets. Details of some specific suggestions can be seen under the conclusions section. 	<p><i>We will intensify dissemination efforts as detailed in our reply to the respective point in Conclusions.</i></p> <p><i>Specifically, taking into consideration the suggestion of the EEC, we have contacted a market analysis and also investigated the demand for the program and its potential in specific neighboring countries and a number of them have been identified as primary targets for our marketing campaign.</i></p> <p><i>Additionally, we have carried out research about options for recruitment agents and we currently in the process of signing an agreement with one that suits the profile and the mission of Cyl.</i></p> <p><i>As stated above, within our efforts to increase students' numbers, we have also started adding other promotional activities in our portfolio of recruitment activities both in Cyprus and in neighboring countries and these will be further intensified since a larger financial commitment has been made.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>● Furthermore, the EEC advocates for bolstering employment opportunities within the industry, mirroring the support provided to the academic sector. This suggestion aligns with the current trend where a significant proportion (70%) of Cyl graduates find employment within academia.</p>	<p>As explained above, <i>the Graduate School has made plans to collaborate closely with the Innovation Office of Cyl on developing a strategic plan to connect students with Cyl's extensive network of industrial partners, and thus, maximize the opportunities for industrial employment. This will involve introducing students to potential employers through organized events, arranging campus interviews, etc. One example is the opportunity offered already to our students to participate through The Cyprus Institute at the Reflect Festival in Limassol, which is the largest tech & entrepreneurship event in Cyprus.</i></p> <p><i>The mandatory internship that has been introduced within the curriculum of the program and which can be carried out externally in private company or a governmental unit will also facilitate the bolstering of the employment opportunities for our students within these sectors.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The absence of a dedicated Students Information System as well as Online Learning Platform presents a significant impediment to the efficient management of Graduate School operations and the optimal streamlining of associated processes and the course materials to be made available online to enrolled MSc/MPhil students. 	<p><i>We sincerely thank the EEC for acknowledging the need for a dedicated Students Information System. Indeed, this has been a great omission at the Graduate School and for this reason during the last few months, we have done a market research and through a tender procedure we have selected a provider of a Students Information System. The system will serve as a central platform for all students, faculty and admin staff to interact, submit and retrieve data, grades, educational material, reports etc. It will greatly benefit the operations of the school and it will streamline all procedures. In the future it will also be able to be used for integration with the Learning Management System in order to facilitate the learning and teaching experience.</i></p> <p><i>The contract with the provider company has been signed on the 21st of May and the first meetings to plan the instalment of the system have already taken place.</i></p> <p><i>The provision is to have part of the system ready to use beginning of the new Academic Year, although it will be fully functional a few months later.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Furthermore, the limited student population poses challenges in the comprehensive collection of key performance indicators, 	<p><i>The EEC refers to the critical challenge of the limited student population. We acknowledge this issue and we are fully aware of the difficulties it presents in gathering</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>including statistics related to student demographics, academic progression, satisfaction levels, attrition rates, and post-graduation career trajectories.</p>	<p><i>comprehensive key performance indicators. To address this, we are exploring several strategies, including the collaboration with Peer Institutions: We are exploring partnerships with similar institutions to share data and best practices, which can help us benchmark our performance and identify areas for improvement. We are additionally investing in advanced data analytics tools that will allow us to better analyze and interpret the data we collect, providing more meaningful insights into student demographics, academic progression, satisfaction levels, attrition rates, and post-graduation career trajectories.</i></p> <p><i>These measures should help mitigate the impact of our limited student population on data collection and enhance our ability to accurately assess and improve our performance.</i></p>	
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6. Additional for doctoral programmes
 (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
 (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The EEC was very pleased with the organisation of the on-site visit, which was meticulously planned by the Cyl. The EEC concluded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cyl has an excellent scientific infrastructure, and granting MSc students access to it has presented an incredible opportunity for them to enhance their technical skills through practical, hands-on experience. • All the 21 MSc students to date from the programme have gotten employment. This 100% job rate is impressive and is quite a unique feature of the programme. • The student mentoring is excellent, as reflected by students during interactions with them. They greatly appreciated the overall support from the Graduate School who have gone above and beyond to support the students during challenging times such as the COVID-19. • Embedding the transfer skill course is excellent for the students to learn such important skills and prepare them for their future steps. • Since the MSc programme has limited students, it almost gives an incredibly higher staff to student ratio (nearly 1 staff every 2 students), allowing extensive opportunities for interaction 	<p><i>We would like to sincerely thank the EEC for the positive evaluation and the exemplary comments it has provided.</i></p> <p><i>The evaluation received is very detailed and constructive and it will enable the Cyl to continue striving for excellence.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>with the members of the teaching staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to world-class instrumentation and experimental facilities in relevant fields empowers MSc students to conduct research on cutting-edge topics. This is exemplified by the high-quality theses presented to the external committee, which showcase the utilisation of these facilities and expertise. Several of these thesis works have been published in top-ranked journals, highlighting the exceptional achievement of MSc students in securing publication in prestigious outlets. ● The strong connections between Cyl and the industry constitute a distinctive feature of the MSc programme. This linkage provides students with valuable internship opportunities, as they engage with industrial partners who may become their future employers. Additionally, it facilitates the transformation of academic research from MSc projects into tangible products or services. ● The teaching team comprises esteemed researchers, providing students the invaluable opportunity to collaborate directly with them. Moreover, they seamlessly integrate cutting-edge research into their teaching, providing students with unparalleled access to the latest developments in the field. This offering not only facilitates training from the 		
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<p>foremost researchers but also enriches the educational experience for students.</p> <p>Overall, the programme has numerous strengths that make it a unique MSc/MPhil programme with significant potential for further enhancement.</p>		
<p>The following final remarks offer suggestions aimed at further improving the programme's quality and maximising its offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To date, the programme has graduated 21 MSc students over a five-year period, averaging approximately four students per year. Currently, there are no on-site students enrolled in the programme. The committee strongly suggests to the Cyl to implement measures aimed at increasing the number of MSc students in the programme to double digits, aiming for at least ten or more students. This approach will offer several advantages for both Cyl and its students. It will optimise staff time, ensuring that resources are utilised efficiently by accommodating a larger cohort of students rather than running full courses for a handful. For students, a larger peer group will facilitate networking 	<p><i>At the Cyl we are aware of the issue of low student numbers in the master's programs. Unfortunately, this is a general phenomenon which is observed in master's programs in many higher education institutes in Cyprus and abroad.</i></p> <p><i>The additional challenges that Cyl faces in attracting students include the lack of an undergraduate pool of students to attract from and the fact that the Cyl is a young institution with a short presence in Cyprus. As part of our efforts to increase students' numbers we have already started adding new promotional activities to our recruitment campaign both in Cyprus and internationally and these will be further intensified since a larger financial commitment has been made.</i></p> <p><i>We absolutely agree with the EEC that increasing the students' numbers will offer invaluable to the student and will better serve the operation of the program.</i></p>	

<p>opportunities, enabling them to learn from diverse perspectives, cultures, and build valuable connections for the future. Additionally, a larger student cohort enhances the feedback mechanism by allowing for anonymity in evaluations, which is challenging to achieve in smaller groups.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of expanding the student cohort, the external committee noted that the programme's marketing efforts have not effectively reached a wider audience. While some dissemination has occurred through social media and local newspapers, the majority of student enrollments have been generated through word of mouth. To address this, a comprehensive marketing strategy is necessary. This strategy should include conducting market surveys to gauge demand for the programme, identifying priority countries in Europe (e.g., Greece, as well as potential secondary targets), Asia (e.g., China, India), and Africa. By prioritising the top five countries initially, opportunities for recruitment can be maximised. Additionally, establishing recruitment agents in these countries can help channel student interest toward the programme. While concerns were raised about the budget allocation for these activities, it is important to recognise that the benefits of such investments will far outweigh 	<p><i>Taking into consideration the suggestion of the EEC, we have contacted a market analysis and also investigated the demand for the program and its potential in specific neighboring countries and a number of them have been identified as primary targets for our marketing campaign.</i></p> <p><i>Additionally, we have carried out research about options for recruitment agents and we currently in the process of signing an agreement with one that suits the profile and the mission of Cyl.</i></p> <p><i>As stated above, within our efforts to increase students' numbers, we have also started adding other promotional activities in our portfolio of recruitment activities both in Cyprus and in neighboring countries and these will be further intensified since a larger financial commitment has been made.</i></p>	

<p>the costs, making it a worthwhile endeavor</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As noted in Section 3, the EEC observed that there is currently a lack of provision for professional academic teaching training, particularly for new staff. A need for such training becomes more pronounced as the student cohort expands in future, Potential avenues for such training include exploring opportunities within the higher education sector in Cyprus, online courses offered by institutions in Europe or the UK (such as those provided by Higher Education Institute in the UK), or even considering the recruitment of experts in academic education. 	<p><i>As explained before, taking into consideration the advice of the EEC, we have explored different options for providing our teaching staff with pedagogical and didactic training and several opportunities for systematic training and development will be available from the next academic year in order for our faculty to stay up-to-date with teaching pedagogies and refine their instructional methods. The training of our faculty, especially of the new ones, will be integrated as standard practice in the procedures of the Graduate School. As explained above, the most representative activity towards this direction that is already planned for Fall 2024, is the organization of a course on “Teaching in Higher Education: Pedagogical Principles and Hands-on Applications” which will be offered to all Cyl faculty.</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are two more new tracks (water and energy) needed to this MSc/MPhil programme. As a result, the introduction of new core and elective modules presents several challenges that must be addressed and reflected in programme descriptions, as well as in brochures and recruitment materials where applicable. - Firstly, there is a concern regarding compulsory courses that diverge significantly from the students' chosen area of specialisation. In an MSc/MPhil programme where students typically seek to deepen their knowledge and expertise in specific topics, mandatory courses in unrelated areas may deter 	<p><i>As already detailed in our replies in Part 1, we have undertaken the exercise to rethink and clarify the holistic nature of a Master’s program in Environmental and Energy Sciences, which encompasses three key components related to environmental integrity and sustainability: atmosphere, water and energy systems. These are implemented via three Tracks (Meteorology and Atmospheric Sciences, Water Sciences, and Sustainable Energy) that are covered in the four 4 Core courses during Autumn Semester (and several electives during Spring Semester, see also Annex 7). The Core courses are:</i></p> <p><i>ES 403 Atmospheric Science ES 404 Environmental Hydrology ES 405 Energy Science Fundamentals ES 408 Meteorology and Climate</i></p> <p><i>The students will be selecting 3 of the 4 available Core courses in the Autumn Semester (10 ECTS each) to obtain the 30</i></p>	

<p>potential applicants and lead to attrition after enrollment. This poses a potential risk to the programme's long-term viability. To address this, a comprehensive strategy is needed that goes beyond simply exposing students to a broad range of subjects. This strategy should involve a thorough review of the programme structure, considering the introduction of general foundational courses followed by specialised compulsory and elective modules tailored to students' interests and career goals.</p>	<p><i>ECTS for that Semester. The content in each of these courses is foundational at the post-graduate level and allows the students to obtain cross-component absorption of the main workings of the environment and their interactions, by being taught concepts additional to their Track preference, that complement and support their specialization (which will be fully achieved through the Track and other electives during Spring Semester).</i></p>	
<p>- Secondly, the introduction of new tracks raises concerns about the relevance of the existing programme title, MSc Environmental Science, particularly in accommodating 'water' and 'energy' areas, which are substantial enough in themselves to warrant standalone programs. While alternative titles like MSc Energy & Environmental Science or Innovation in Sustainable Development have been proposed and discussed, a more holistic approach is needed to ensure that any changes to the programme title align with its overarching objectives. This entails shifting focus from fitting staff and their research areas into the MSc program to designing the programme itself first and then aligning individual staff expertise through taught courses. Nonetheless, as</p>	<p><i>We have proactively addressed this comment by proposing to add the term "Energy" in the existing program title so that it becomes Masters (MSc or MPhil) in "Environmental and Energy Sciences", to faithfully reflect the expanded content and the additional specialization Tracks. This title also lines-up nicely with the title of the existing Doctoral program of the Cyprus Institute in Energy, Environment and Atmospheric Sciences. It is also fair, since the two programs share relevant elective courses. This alignment of the two post-graduate programs, will also assist their promotion, emphasizing the Cyprus Institute's integrated offer of research-based excellence on the scientific frontiers and advanced methodologies at the vanguard of interconnected issues related to atmospheric sciences and climate, hydrology, and sustainable energy.</i></p>	

<p>student numbers increase in future, most staff members will have the opportunity to get involved through supervision of MSc projects.</p>		
<p>- Thirdly, it is crucial to harmonise the course contents not only for the assessment of modules but also to ensure fairness to students who have similar offerings within the programme. Currently, many modules have varying weightages of assessment that lack equivalence with each other. Furthermore, inconsistencies in learning outcomes and course descriptions across modules may cause dissatisfaction among students enrolled in different tracks.</p>	<p><i>As already mentioned in the pertinent reply in part 2 above (and detail again here and shown in Annex 5), we have now harmonized the assessment methods for all courses, ensuring horizontal equivalence and equitable participation and assessment in the three Tracks (see Annex 5).</i></p> <p><i>The four Core courses in the Autumn Semester (ES403, ES404, ES405, ES408), as the ones providing the foundational knowledge of the respective components of Environmental and Energy Sciences, require assessment through Final Exams (75% weight) and Coursework/Assignments (25%). This ratio has been now modified to be the same across all four Core courses. The remaining elective courses in the Spring Semester include a few (ES409, ES412, ES413, EAS513, EAS515) that require a combination of Final Exam (75%) and Coursework (25%). The remaining courses (ES416, ES418, EAS522, ES425) require a combination between Coursework (40%) and Project/Presentations (60%) and this ratio has been now modified to be the same across all four. Thus, each of the three Tracks includes one elective with the same assessment combination of coursework and project/presentations, ensuring the fair treatment of the students irrespective of their chosen Track.</i></p>	
<p>- Lastly, the entry requirements for the programme currently encompass criteria such as natural science, mathematics, and engineering. However, given the interdisciplinary nature of the course, it may need to be broadened to ensure prospective students feel a sense of belonging.</p>	<p><i>We completely understand the comment of the EEC and we agree that broadening the options for the background of the applicants in the admission criteria will have multiple benefits for the program. For this reason, we have expanded the background options for eligible applicants, that can be found in Annex 4.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>Additionally, the programme description presented to the outside world requires the revision to align its contents and harmonise them accordingly with recruitment campaigns, ensuring that the programme's strengths are clearly and visibly communicated.</p>	<p><i>Based on the advice of the EEC we will proceed with a general reform of the website and of how the information on the program is presented to the public in order to better stress its strong points and competitive advantages.</i></p> <p><i>Indicative text that will be used as follows:</i></p> <p><i>Why study for a MSc or MPhil in Environmental Sciences?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To equip with the knowledge to interpret and address environmental challenges</i> • <i>To become part of a top regional research institute with strong industry and government links</i> • <i>To acquaint with our state-of-the-art facilities in atmospheric science and technology</i> • <i>Benefit from a low student-faculty ratio 2:1.</i> • <i>As part of a holistic educational approach a variety of Transferable Skills Courses/Schools/Seminars/Colloquia is always available</i> • <i>To receive industry exposure and experience through the mandatory internship</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International mobility opportunities, such as those provided by the Erasmus programme, offer excellent avenues for students to pursue short-term placements with international collaborators. While PhD students have largely taken advantage of this opportunity, there is potential to further explore and expand this aspect to benefit MSc students as well in the future. 	<p><i>The Erasmus+ program is open and actively promoted to all students at The Cyprus Institute, Master's and PhD, as well as staff. Currently, a larger number of PhD students decide to apply to participate in Erasmus+, as the program itself allows for more flexibility in the case of PhD students, offering them the opportunity to implement short-term mobilities with a duration of 5 to 30 days, in addition to long-term mobilities lasting from 2 to 12 months. Indeed, the majority of our PhD students prefer short-term mobilities, as they better align with their academic and research commitments, leading to fewer disruptions to their study programs. On the other hand, in the case of Master's students, the Erasmus+</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p><i>programme prioritizes long-term mobilities with a duration of 2 to 12 months. However, as our MSc/MPhil programs typically last 1 or 1.5 years, long-term mobilities conflict with our students' academic schedules, particularly during the two initial semesters when course attendance is mandatory. Although students have the opportunity to go on a mobility during the summer term, this coincides with their thesis/dissertation preparation, making it less feasible. To address this issue, the Erasmus+ programme offers a "blended" option for Master's students, allowing for shorter mobilities of 5-30 days when supplemented with a virtual component. In order to offer the opportunity to more Master's students to benefit from Erasmus+, the Graduate School will promote more intensively the blended option, providing assistance and support in connecting them with appropriate hosting institutions/organisations and programs. Furthermore, the mandatory internship component that was added in the revised MSc/MPhil curriculum offers an additional pathway for participation in Erasmus+ through traineeship mobility. This opportunity will be communicated to Master's students through dedicated information sessions, ensuring broader awareness and participation.</i></p>	
<p>● A few other areas to consider would be: - Considering the feedback gathered from past students, opening the programme as a part-time course could serve multiple purposes: supporting the increase in the student cohort and providing opportunities for individuals with full-time jobs. This expansion would enhance the programme's outreach and impact.</p>	<p><i>As stated before, we absolutely understand the advise of the EEC to introduce a part-time mode of delivery of the program as this could serve multiple purposes: support the increase in the student cohort and provide opportunities for individuals with full-time jobs. This expansion can enhance the programme's outreach and impact. For this reason, a part-time mode design of the program is currently in progress, and will soon be submitted to CYQAA for approval.</i></p>	
<p>- As the programme is expected to grow in the future, there is a need to</p>	<p><i>As stated before, we sincerely thank the EEC for acknowledging the need for a dedicated Students Information System. Indeed, this</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>explore the development of an online teaching and learning platform. This platform would make resources readily available to students and provide a forum for course-related discussions. Implementing such a platform would streamline communication, saving staff time on individual emails, while also standardising teaching methods through digitalisation. Such platforms can be sourced from external suppliers and could also support other programmes of the Cyl. This move would align the programme with other institutions, ultimately enhancing the overall student experience.</p>	<p><i>has been a great omission at the Graduate School and for this reason we have done a market research and through a tender procedure we have selected a Students Information System that is currently being installed. We expect that part of the system will be available to use by our students, faculty and administrative staff from the next Academic Year. This will immensely facilitate the interaction and communication between students, faculty and admin staff and will streamline the operations of the school.</i></p> <p><i>An online Learning Platform will also be integrated into the system once this is fully functional in order to facilitate the learning and teaching experience.</i></p>	
<p>- Currently, EDI (equality, diversity, and inclusion) is not formally practiced within the programme. Although Cyl's Equal Opportunities Policy follows EDI principles, it is advisable to formalise its operation and increase awareness among students as it will become more important as student numbers increase in future.</p>	<p><i>As the EEC has observed, at the Cyl we implement an Equal Opportunities Policy, Annex 6, which is applicable to all staff and students and is monitored by a dedicated Equal Opportunities Committee. We understand that as the numbers of the students increase it will be necessary to increase awareness among students and further formalize its operation through activities such as dedicated awareness meetings, open discussions etc.</i></p>	
<p>- The current employment rate for students in the programme stands at 100%, but challenges may arise as student numbers increase. To address this, the Graduate School and Innovation Office could collaborate on developing a strategic plan to connect students with Cyl's extensive network of industrial partners. This could involve introducing students to potential</p>	<p><i>As described above, it is our priority to create closer bonds of our school with the industry. Thus, we have already introduced a mandatory internship in the program which enforces the connection with industry. Additionally, the Graduate School plans to collaborate closely with the Innovation Office of Cyl on developing a strategic plan to connect students with Cyl's extensive network of industrial partners. This will involve introducing students to potential employers through organized events, arranging campus interviews, etc.</i></p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>employers or arranging campus interviews to expand placement opportunities. Such initiatives would not only enhance the programme's reputation but also enrich the overall student experience, making it a unique and appealing choice for students within and beyond Cyprus.</p>		
<p>Overall, this MSc/MPhil programme exhibits remarkable strengths, and the EEC wholeheartedly recommends its continuation. Furthermore, the EEC encourages ongoing efforts to implement the suggestions provided, thereby further enhancing the programme's comprehensiveness, enriching the student experience, and maximising its impact.</p>	<p><i>We thank the EEC for the suggestions which will be implemented as described. This will result in a clearer and more comprehensive program with enhanced student experience and impact.</i></p>	

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
<p>Provost of the Graduate School and President of The Cyprus Institute</p>	<p>Prof. Stavros Malas</p>	
<p>Program Coordinator</p>	<p>Dr Panos Hadjinicolaou</p>	
<p>Head of Graduate School</p>	<p>Dr Chrysanthia Leontiou</p>	
<p>Click to enter Name</p>	<p>Click to enter Position</p>	
<p>Click to enter Name</p>	<p>Click to enter Position</p>	



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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



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Date: 06/06/2024

