

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 15.07.2022

Higher Education Institution's Response

- Higher Education Institution:
University Neapolis Pafos

- Town: Pafos

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

In Greek: Μεταπτυχιακό στην Συμβουλευτική
Ψυχολογία (3 έτη, 180 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό)

In English: MSc in Counselling Psychology (3 years,
180 ECTS, MSc)

Programme Name

- Language(s) of instruction: Greek
- 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
As to MSc in Counselling Psychology: 1. Some curriculum choices are somewhat 'old school'. For example, courses tend to focus on categorical psychiatric diagnoses and psychotherapeutic schools rather than more recent, dimensional approaches and evidence-based interventions targeting transdiagnostic mechanisms. As another example, the psychological assessment course focuses on test administration/scoring/interpretation rather than on the broader decision-making process and the empirical cycle underlying it. Finally, the master's thesis is conceived as an extensive report (25000-40000 words) rather than a publishable paper.	We thank the EEC on the above comment. We have taken into consideration the suggestion and we have tried to "balance" the importance of students being taught the need of the categorical psychiatric diagnoses and psychotherapeutic schools as we believe strongly that this is needed while at the same time integrating on our CPSYC506 Psychopathology course a more transdiagnostic mechanism. The syllabus with the necessary changes is attached, (see Annex 3) . The same "modernization" is in effect for the Psychometry course, while we made a significant attempt in retaining some of the material as they are highly needed for the placements of the students in their appropriate practicum experience (i.e. the teaching of specific psychometric measures). Concerning the Thesis component, we include in our curriculum the extensive type of a report as a thesis so that, if students want to further pursue a PhD degree, their Thesis can then be utilized into transforming it into one and/or two publishable articles, as it has happened a few times in the past. At least 5 published articles have already been published in prestigious journals with high impact factors that resulted from students' thesis. Therefore, we have decided to retain our current model of completion of the Thesis.	Choose an item.
2. The objectives, learning outcomes and course content of CPSYC504 (Multicultural Counselling) seem to be broader than the title suggests (also targeting physical disabilities). It might be good to choose a more appropriate title for this course.	We have accepted the suggestion of the EEC and we have replaced the title of the course CPSYC504. Specifically, instead of " Multicultural Counseling ", we have adjusted the title to " Counseling the Diverse " which we believe satisfies the suggestion of the EEC.	Choose an item.
3. The tuition fees are too high and in the internship, students do not get any type of remuneration.	Concerning the comment of the EEC about tuition/fees being too high, we have revisited the costs of the program as well as our competitor programs in Cyprus. This assessment yielded that our tuition and fees are already lower than our competitors, especially taking into consideration that our program is 6 semesters long whereas other competitive programs are 5 semesters with similar tuition and fees. Therefore, we have decided to keep our tuition and fees as they are.	

<p>4. Overall, the program has a long duration. The EEC wonders if the number of courses could be reduced. It seems that at least some courses needlessly repeat content that is typically part of a bachelor's program (e.g. basic knowledge in research methods and statistics).</p>	<p>We have taken the above suggestion by the EEC to possibly reduce our MSc in Counseling Psychology from 6 to 5 semesters very seriously.</p> <p>After a long discussion, and mainly considering that our planning of the immediate future of the Department is to advance our MSc into a PhD in Counseling Psychology, we have concluded that we will leave the operation of the program as is, since it will soon be updated into a PhD anyway and changes the necessary will be made.</p>	
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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>Across programs:</p> <p>1. There is a high load on final exams as a major part of the assessment procedure. In order to promote a more competency-based assessment, the EEC strongly recommends 17 providing an array of different forms of assessment which address and permit students to develop assessment literacy and enhance their overall graduate competencies.</p> <p>2. The high value of the final exam focuses the student to memorize the information for the exam. If a robust continuous assessment is designed to guide the student to solve complex problems during the course (i.e. project based), with significant weighting, the EEC strongly recommends decreasing the weight of the final exam (i.e. 30%), to orient the student to the learning process.</p> <p>3. It is recommended that in all courses, the students complete the formative activities to do the exam.</p> <p>4. It is suggested to review the type of the formative assessment activities designed along the course and reduce the weekly activities for problem based activities (less quantity but with deeper demand to the students). As to BSc in Psychology:</p> <p>5. Apart from the practicum, the program is very theoretical and contains almost no hands-on training. For example, in the domain of</p>	<p>Points 1-4 have been addressed previously in our answer to the EEC above. Concerning points 1-4, we took the EECs recommendations very seriously. Therefore, we have changed our grading and assignment values. Specifically, about the percentage weights of the courses, we have decided to accept the recommendation of the EEC and have changed the weights of all our BSc, MSc in Educational Psychology and MSc in Counseling Psychology to be: 50% of the course for final exam and 50% of the assignments/activities.</p> <p>Additionally, a student must attain a minimum grade of 50% on each component in order to be considered that they have successfully completed the course. Finally, we have also divided our relative courses into three grading components, the activities, the coursework and the exam. This way, we encourage their ongoing assessment procedures throughout the semester and not give as much emphasis on the final exam component.</p> <p>Concerning Point # 5, it is possible that we may have not passed across all the variety of practicum training our undergraduate students come in contact with. Utilizing faculty and graduate students, the undergraduate students learn the initial clinical interview of a psychologist, conducting a suicide assessment, process and conceptualize case studies of individuals within an array of disorders, couples, families and specialized populations. Additionally, they are introduced to counseling videos of best practices as well as certain psychotherapeutic approaches (i.e. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy).</p> <p>We do take into consideration the comment by the EEC concerning the psychometric tools however, so we will implement that in our future curricula.</p>	<p>Choose an item.</p>

psychological assessment, students mainly get theoretical information on tests and observe others while administering tests. The EEC recommends considering the inclusion of some “hands on” training already in the undergraduate program (e.g., standardized administration, scoring and interpretation of intelligence tests).		
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3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

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<p>Across programs:</p> <p>1. Over the last couple of years, there has been a considerable staff turnover; it appears to be difficult to keep staff on board for a longer time, possibly in part due to the fact that Pafos is located in a remote corner of Cyprus; also, the fact that all programs are taught in Greek limits the market for recruitment; as a consequence of the large turnover, current staff consists of mainly junior faculty (8 out of 10 staff members are lecturers)</p> <p>2. Teaching and administrative load are very high, as a consequence of which there is very little time for research; during the visit it became clear that all current staff is already at maximum teaching load; moreover, given the fact that the university and its programs have been established quite recently, programs and courses are still in development; according to the documentation, staff can devote only 1% to 5% of their time to research activities.</p> <p>3. Although staff members teach in their domains of expertise, teaching assignments have a very broad scope; several staff members teach in multiple subdisciplines of psychology (e.g. developmental + cognitive +); as it is almost impossible to keep track of recent insights in so many domains, this may compromise the extent to which teaching is research-based.</p>	<p>Concerning Point # 1 above, we have previously addressed it as well. Specifically, we thank them for addressing our difficulty in recruiting staff to our university. We had a fruitful discussion with our new manager of our HR department with some good suggestions to us for improving our recruiting percentage. Concerning point # 2, we refer the EEC to our Policy (NUP Procedure 06.120)(see Annex 4) that makes detailed reference to our recruitment procedure as well as the advancement of faculty. Indeed, the range of salaries depending on the rank of the faculty is not mentioned and this will be discussed with the university administration.</p> <p>Concerning Points 2 and 3, once again it has been addressed previously. Specifically, the university has considered the suggestion of the EEC and has already announced two positions for immediate hiring (see https://www.nup.ac.cy/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Lecturer-or-Assistant-Professor-in-Psychology-.pdf).</p> <p>Additionally, a Special Teaching Staff will be hired in September 2022. Upon completion, of the application process and the hiring of these positions is filled, two more positions will be announced based on the new needs assessments conducted by the department, depending on what two specialties are hired. These hirings will also allow for more specialty-specific courses to be taught by faculty as well. Finally, a needs assessment for faculty further research development was conducted.</p> <p>The results were discussed with the administration of the university and a plan of action in fulfilling these needs was implemented. Furthermore, research seminars will be conducted bimonthly by the department to aid each faculty in their research growth and incentives were added to the research policy of the university, as can be seen in the equivalent attached NUP Policy 4.100, (see Annex 2)</p>	<p>Choose an item.</p>
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

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<p>As to MSc of Counselling Psychology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recently, the department has come across the problem of a small number of students who fail on the competency exam that must be successful in order to enter the practicum. The department asks the committee to advise on how to handle this problem and come up with ideas on what might be possible ways in which students in such cases could be redirected towards a trajectory that enables them to nonetheless obtain a master's degree. One possible solution might be to create an alternative type of internship (e.g., a 45 ECTS research internship in the domain of counselling psychology), that can be taken if the clinical practicum is not an option and that - in case the students have obtained all other credits - can provide them with a master's degree in counselling psychology (possibly one with a slightly different name, referring to the theoretical/research orientation). That degree would not provide them with a licence to practice, but might direct them to pursuing a PhD in psychology. It would also be good to have fewer courses and more practice. It would be good if the duration was less than 3 years. 	<p>Concerning the point above that refers to our MSc in Counseling Psychology students, we thank the EEC about the fruitful discussion we had concerning what happens in case a student either failed the competency exam multiple times and/or cannot enter the practicum aspect of the MSc in Counseling Psychology but has successfully completed the components of the successfully passing the courses and the thesis.</p> <p>We have decided to accept the suggestion of the EEC and we have added two courses, Research Seminar I (PSYC530) and Research Seminar II (PSYC531), each with the equivalent of 22.5 ECTS each (see relevant tentative syllabus).</p> <p>In these two courses during the last year of the MSc, students will be involved in research conducted by the research laboratories of the psychology department, help professors with their running projects, as well as complete their own thesis. The syllabus of these courses is attached in the document. Upon successful completion of these two courses, students will be awarded an MSc in Counseling Psychology without the practical training component. Therefore, they will not be able to practice as certified counseling psychologists but could continue with a research-based future career.</p>	<p>Choose an item.</p>
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5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

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6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

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7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

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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>Findings of the EEC</p> <p>Overall, the evaluation process was very well prepared by the department. The documentation provided was clear and up to date and contained most of the required information. During the visit, presentations are clear and concise, leaving enough time for questions and exchange of thoughts. The discussions took place in a constructive atmosphere and staff were very open to suggestions. Overall, the programs are well-designed. Looking at course descriptions, the content of most courses seems to put much emphasis on theories as compared to empirical evidence. For the BSc and the MSc Educational Psychology, the EEC recommends moving the dissertation / master's thesis to the compulsory part of the program, as this is deemed indispensable to meet international standards. We have identified both strengths and areas of improvement. We will not reiterate all our comments but highlight just a few of the most important ones. First, teaching staff is highly motivated and shows clear ownership over the programs and the courses. However, the team is quite junior and there is a need to recruit additional staff members. Currently, teaching load and administrative load are very high, leaving almost no time for research. The EEC strongly recommends to give priority to the enhance opportunities for research and career</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for identifying our strengths that we also agree with. We also thank them for all their invaluable feedback on improving our program. We believe that we have sufficiently addressed all points and we made the necessary amendments where needed to improve all our programs of study, making our curriculum more student-centered and significantly more efficient for faculty, staff and students alike.</p>	<p>Choose an item.</p>

development, which will also strengthen the teaching-research nexus. Second, across the programs and courses, the EEC feels that student assessment too heavily relies on final exams. The EEC recommends for all programs a stronger focus on formative assessment and less emphasis on the final exams.		
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D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Pantelis Sklias	Rector	
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Date: 12.07.2022

