

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date.

## Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study**  
**Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**  
**In Greek:**  
Διδακτορικό στις Τουρκικές Σπουδές  
**In English:**  
PhD in Turkish Studies (3 academic years, 240 ECTS)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek with extensive use of Turkish and 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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
1.1. Students could be more involved in activities collecting information about student progression and student satisfaction and career paths of graduates.	Elected student representatives are members of the Department Board and participate in Board Meetings thus contributing to discussions and decision-making. Furthermore, the Department will establish a special yearly meeting with student representatives so that they may present student concerns about their progress, satisfaction, and career paths. The Department expects to organize the first such meeting in April 2024, and aims to establish such meetings as a permanent fixture to be held at the end of Spring Semester, to review the past academic year and update its SWOT analysis based on student feedback.	Choose level of compliance:
1.2. The formation of an alumni association for the Department would be very helpful in providing such information.	The Department Board has appointed two of its academic members as Alumni Liaisons, to collect data on current and former students. In this task, they may be assisted by the University's already existing Alumni Association. The Alumni Liaisons, will provide the data to the Department for further actions.	Choose level of compliance:
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### Findings for PhD Programme

The PhD programme under evaluation is subject to quality assurance procedures. These procedures have a formal status operationalized by the IQA committee. Through the whole quality assurance procedure the

students have the opportunity to be involved in the design and implementation of the programme through their representatives.

The PhD programme is publicly available on the website and presents a clear view about the content, aims, and outcomes of the programme. The quality assurance system of the university is followed by the Department and adjustments are made when needed. Comparing previous reports with what we found on our onsite visit, the Department implements what is expected. Students and staff participate equally in the quality assurance processes and improvement of the programme. Academic freedom is guaranteed and necessary measures are taken to combat discrimination should it should occur. The PhD programme provides the opportunity for students to be trained in the Department's areas of expertise including collaboration with their instructors. The programme is designed so that students progress through the programme by completing exams and assignments which correspond to the level of the programme and the ECTS. The proper evaluation processes are followed. The structure of the programme meets the requirements of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The programme is regularly monitored, taking into account the scientific progress and needs of the students. The Department follows the recommendations of the university regarding selection criteria and is adequately implemented. The main intended learning outcomes of gaining expert knowledge of Turkish History/Politics, Linguistics, and Literature are routinely met and students earn their qualifications. However not all information including pass rates is readily publicly accessible. During our meetings with the staff members we received limited statistical information about the students, including pass rates, student progression, and so on. We received primarily qualitative rather than quantitative information about the programme, which is to be expected.

#### Strengths for PhD programme

The Department rigorously follows the policies recommended by the university and immediately take actions to remediate any problems that arise. The programme of study is designed so that students fulfill the primary departmental outcome of producing graduates who are proficient in the Turkish language and experts in Turkish history, politics, and literature so as to meet Cypriot society's needs. The Department offers many public activities including cultural events which are enthusiastically attended by members of the public.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD programme

Students could be more involved in activities collecting information about student progression and student satisfaction and career paths of graduates. The formation of an alumni association for the Department would be very helpful in providing such information.

## 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
2.1. Other than one staff member, it appears that most staff do not offer meaningful steps and credit as students work toward completing their degree. We recommend a weekly or regular seminar where PhD students and staff can meet and present their work.	The Department often organizes lectures and seminars given by PhD students. Starting with next semester, the Department will organize a colloquium, which will give the opportunity to all doctoral candidates to present their work to staff and students on a regular basis, in order to obtain feedback, and also in order to better integrate PhD students into the Department community.	Choose level of compliance:
2.2. Students complain about limited job opportunities. The Department could offer alumni sessions where graduates of the programme discuss possible career opportunities.	The Alumni Liaisons, mentioned above, will organize meetings of alumni and students, in which alumni of the Department may share with current students their experiences in the job market.	Choose level of compliance:
2.3. Students have the opportunity to receive financial assistance to complete their studies as well as to teach, thus applying their learning in the classroom.	The School of Graduate Studies allocates to the Department an amount of money, which the Department Council awards as scholarships to deserving Doctoral Students. Also, in certain cases, PhD students may teach courses or be employed in research projects conducted by the faculty.	Choose level of compliance:
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### Findings for PhD programme

Students work closely with their supervisors in their papers and research, seminars, and colloquia. However, there is little interaction and scientific communication between the PhD students. Assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Students find that professors are accessible outside classtime, giving supportive feedback, including them in their research, and actively involved in their professional development. Students are able to meet regularly with their professors.

### Strengths for PhD programme



Teaching staff collaborate well with students in research and application of theory and practice. We observed that at least one professor, for example, involves students in his/her own research. PhD students are given the opportunity to apply what they learn in a classroom situation when they teach their own courses. The theses students complete demonstrate mastery of either History/Politics or Language/Literature. Students have the opportunity to obtain financial assistance.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD programme

Other than one staff member, it appears that most staff do not offer meaningful steps and credit as students work toward completing their degree. We recommend a weekly or regular seminar where PhD students and staff can meet and present their work. Students complain about limited job opportunities. The Department could offer alumni sessions where graduates of the programme discuss possible career opportunities. Students have the opportunity to receive financial assistance to complete their studies as well as to teach, thus applying their learning in the classroom.

### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>3.1. We find it concerning that there are limited opportunities for higher-ranking members of staff to be given time off so that they can develop themselves professionally including doing what is necessary to be promoted to full professor.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, with only three members of the Department being permanent staff currently, nothing can be done at this moment, as at least two of the three are bound to serve as Chairperson and Vice Chairperson at any given time. With the promotion of current junior faculty, the situation will hopefully improve in the future. Towards the end of 2023, the University allocated a new position to the Department, which has just opened it on the subject of “Turkish Historical Linguistics”. The Department also needs the appointment of a new member as Special Teaching Staff. Meanwhile, the Curriculum is carried out to a certain extent, with the help of Visiting Professors or Special Scientists.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>3.2. We recommend staff be given the opportunities offered by Erasmus and other funding agencies to develop their networks, methodologies, and research and be given time away from teaching and administrative duties.</p>	<p>Members of the staff have been using the Erasmus Program for brief visits to foreign universities although not as much as they should. The Department and the Erasmus coordinator will encourage colleagues to take more advantage of the opportunities offered by the Erasmus Program.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>3.3. Prioritising the hiring of women in future hires would redress the balance where most of the students are female, and most of the teaching staff male.</p>	<p>The Department agrees that this is certainly desirable, and it should be promoted where possible.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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### Findings for PhD programme

Students regularly evaluate the teaching performance of their instructors. On the basis of recent hires, we can confirm that the process of recruitment works well; however the process takes too long that negatively impacts the stability of the Department. Staff hires are in accordance with the needs of the Department, equally split amongst the Department's three areas of teaching, helping it to achieve its objectives. We are unable to discern if the School offers opportunities for continued learning for staff members. Currently there are eight staff members equally divided across the disciplines which meets the aims and requirements of the Turkish Studies programme. However, as the Department's name is Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies, we find that the Department should be restricted to its current profile in Turkish studies, or add up to four staff members who could provide courses or a complete programme in Middle Eastern Studies.

### Strengths for PhD programme

The number of staff is suitable for offering Turkish studies. That the majority staff members are full time offers stability for the programme. Visiting staff enhance the Department, offering new approaches to the programme. Staff members encourage their students to get involved in a research project and to link their research to teaching. Similar to the collegial cooperation on MA level, we observe that senior staff members help their junior colleagues to develop skills in PhD supervision.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD programme

We find it concerning that there are limited opportunities for higher-ranking members of staff to be given time off so that they can develop themselves professionally including doing what is necessary to be promoted to full professor. We recommend staff be given the opportunities offered by Erasmus and other funding agencies to develop their networks, methodologies, and research and be given time away from teaching and administrative duties. Prioritising the hiring of women in future hires would redress the balance where most of the students are female, and most of the teaching staff male.

#### 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
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##### Findings for PhD programme

Regulations concerning admission and progression are appropriate and regulated by law. Recognition for prior learning and experience is ensured according to regulation. Academic advisors monitor the progress of students and provide personalized guidance and support. The Department applies the principles of the LRC and the European Network and Information Centres. Student progression may be hindered by the fact that many students work while studying. Specific Admission requirements are available online on the website of the Department and are regularly updated.

##### Strengths for PhD programme

All practices are transparent and published. The website is in English and Greek. There is a very good professor/student ratio which makes it possible for individual development of students. During onsite interviews, students evaluated the Department information available online very favourably.

##### Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD programme

No recommendations.

## 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
5.1. We recommend PhD students be given adequate office space for their own work, for grading and preparing for the courses they teach, and for meeting with students.	PhD students who are hired to teach a course in the Department for one semester are given office space in the Department premises. Due to the limited space available, they sometimes have to share space with other PhD students or junior staff.	Choose level of compliance:
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### Findings for PhD programme

Although the latest technology is used, the buildings do not support teaching of languages and lab work. On campus we were not shown the Department, classrooms, study spaces, computer labs, language labs, offices, or meeting rooms. We were only shown the library. Each student is assigned a three-member advisory committee. Non-academic services are available to the students on campus.

### Strengths for PhD programme

Students' mobility within and across universities is encouraged and supported. BA students often continue on to MA and PhD programmes, including in the same Department. Non-traditional students, including part-time and mature students, are also supported.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD programme

We recommend PhD students be given adequate office space for their own work, for grading and preparing for the courses they teach, and for meeting with students.

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
6.1. Professor-PhD student relations could be improved by a means for documenting meetings between them.	All staff members have frequent meetings with their PhD students and offer feedback. The Department will encourage its academic members to monitor the progress of their PhD students in a more regular and organized way, e.g. by keeping a diary of their meetings, in which the student's progress will be recorded in detail.	Choose level of compliance:
6.2. Increasing the number of PhD students would create a more lively intellectual environment for the Department.	The Department actively tries to increase the number of PhD students by opening as many PhD positions as are allocated by the University. In some cases, the Department asks the School of Graduate Studies for exceptions, to accommodate an even larger number than those originally allocated.	Choose level of compliance:
6.3. Students should be encouraged by the programme to have ties across the university with scholars from other disciplines to strengthen the methodology and interdisciplinarity of their research as well as networking outside Cyprus.	PhD students are encouraged to consult with scholars from other disciplines and departments within the University, as well as from abroad. According to University regulations, the Department is obliged to use at least one professor from another department of the University of Cyprus and at least one professor from a foreign university in a PhD student's Five-Member Committee.	Choose level of compliance:
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### 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.

The selection criteria and stages of obtaining the degree including the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are very well defined and implemented. There is a plagiarism detection system. The scientific quality of the PhD thesis is ensured through each student having three advisors and the dissertation being examined by five examiners. The duties of the students' committee, such as regular meetings, are carried out, however, they do not appear to be formalised. Professors are able to provide funding for students to conduct research and travel to conferences. The funding comes from the professors own research and travel budgets. In comparison with similar Departments, i.e. French and English, the Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies Department receives very few PhD studentships. Whereas English receives 8 and French 4 PhD studentships, the Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies Department receives 1. The doctoral programme of study is intrinsically linked to Cypriot society, by the fact that research is conducted in Turkish and that many graduates go on to careers in translating, diplomacy, business, politics, and foreign affairs. The dissertation samples that we read or became aware of cover the entire spectrum of Turkish-Greek relations and Turkish history/politics, language and literature including language acquisition, combatting stereotypes, Turkish politics, Cypriot dialects, Turkish literature, translation.

### Strengths

[A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.](#)

The research conducted by doctoral students is original and often applicable to Cypriot society. The knowledge produced based on research in the Turkish language can help improve relations between the two Cypriot communities, and between Greece and Turkey. Doctoral students are provided adequate resources to pursue their research and intellectual development. The Department's premises include offices for Teaching and Research Staff and other associates, as well one meeting room.

### 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.](#)

Professor-PhD student relations could be improved by a means for documenting meetings between them. Increasing the number of PhD students would create a more lively intellectual environment for the Department. Students should be encouraged by the programme to have ties across the university with scholars from other disciplines to strengthen the methodology and interdisciplinarity of their research as well as networking outside Cyprus.



## 7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	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>B.1. We suggest using more language laboratories, the most up to date learning technologies, and the best methodological approaches to teaching foreign languages to better support student learning of Turkish.</p>	<p>After a decision of the University's Buildings and Grounds Committee of early November 2023, the Department has been allocated two rooms that are currently being appropriately modified to serve as Language Labs for issues regarding the didactics of Turkish as a Foreign Language and for preparing and testing of teaching and learning materials. The Language Lab is being established as part of two research projects on the didactics of Turkish as a Foreign Language, which employs two PhD students of the Department, and it is expected to start functioning during the Spring Semester of the academic year 2023-2024.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>B.2. We suggest a better balance between activities teaching grammar on the one hand, and practicing reading, writing and speech on the other.</p>	<p>This is not particularly applicable to the students of the PhD program, who do not have to attend language courses. According to the recommendations of the ad hoc Committee, mentioned above at point 1.1, the Department will modify the Curriculum, introducing courses designed to improve the students' skills of understanding and speaking Turkish and to develop their communicative skills, thus establishing a better balance between the teaching of fundamental (grammar/theory) and practical (understanding/speaking/communicating/writing) courses.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>B.3. More generalisation at the BA level and more specialisation at the MA level, which is opposite the way the programmes are currently designed, would make more pedagogical sense.</p>	<p>See point 1.4 in the Undergraduate form and point 1.3 in the Master's form.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>B.4. The Department should analyse the cause of the high attrition rate at the BA level and take necessary measures to reduce it.</p>	<p>See the Form on the Undergraduate Program.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>B.5. The Department can be encouraged to better track student progress through their studies through additional evaluation of the programme as a whole.</p>	<p>See above point 1.1.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>B.6. Members of staff should be freed from being overburdened by School administrative duties that hinder their own career progressions.</p>	<p>See above point 3.1.</p>	
<p>B.7. Moving to the new campus will enhance the learning and teaching environment of the Department and interaction with other staff, student and Departments.</p>	<p>This is one of the Department's permanent demands, but it is an issue that lies entirely within the responsibility of the University. Recently, the Department has been informed that after the completion of a new building in the new campus (February 2024) all classes of the Department will be transferred to the new campus.</p>	
<p>B.8. Increasing the number of PhD students will enhance the learning environment of the Department.</p>	<p>See above point 6.2.</p>	
<p>B.9. It would be to the Department's benefit to encourage more international exchange among staff.</p>	<p>See above point 3.2.</p>	
<p>B.10. We suggest preparing statistical information about the job prospects and career patterns of alumni.</p>	<p>See above points 1.1 and 1.2.</p>	



The EEC committee identifies the following key strengths:

- The staff of the Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies Department is fully committed to their important educational mission.
- Overall the Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies Department plays a very important intellectual and non-academic role on the island of Cyprus and in the international academic community.

The EEC committee identifies the following key areas for improvement:

- C. We suggest using more language laboratories, the most up to date learning technologies, and the best methodological approaches to teaching foreign languages to better support student learning of Turkish.
  - D. We suggest a better balance between activities teaching grammar on the one hand, and practicing reading, writing and speech on the other.
  - E. More generalisation at the BA level and more specialisation at the MA level, which is opposite the way the programmes are currently designed, would make more pedagogical sense.
  - F. The Department should analyse the cause of the high attrition rate at the BA level and take necessary measures to reduce it.
  - G. The Department can be encouraged to better track student progress through their studies through additional evaluation of the programme as a whole.
  - H. Members of staff should be freed from being overburdened by School administrative duties that hinder their own career progressions.
  - I. Moving to the new campus will enhance the learning and teaching environment of the Department and interaction with other staff, student and Departments.
  - J. Increasing the number of PhD students will enhance the learning environment of the Department.
  - K. It would be to the Department's benefit to encourage more international exchange among staff.
- We suggest preparing statistical information about the job prospects and career patterns of alumni.



### C.Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Theocharis Stavrides</b>	Associate Professor, Department Chair	
<b>Börte Sagaster</b>	Associate Professor, Department Vice-Chair, Graduate Program Co- Ordinator	
<b>Michalis N. Michael</b>	Associate Professor, Dean of the School of Humanities, Undergraduate Program Co- Ordinator	
<b>Gulshen Sakhatova</b>	Assistant Professor	
<b>Nikos Moudouros</b>	Assistant Professor	
<b>Ahmet Yıkık</b>	Lecturer	
<b>Zenonas Tziarras</b>	Lecturer	

Date: 18 December 2023

