

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date 22/4/2024

### Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study**  
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

**In Greek:**

Διδακτορικό στην Κοινωνιολογία, 240 ECTS, 3-8 έτη

**In English:**

PhD in Sociology, 240 ECTS, 3-8 years

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek, 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)

Compliance Summary: In this section the External Committee found all these aspects compliant (Policy for Quality Assurance, Design/Approval/Ongoing Monitoring and Review, Information Management), except from 1.3 Public Information (Partially Compliant)

You may see below our responses to all comments asking for improvements or recommendations.

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>1. Limited funding means students must work (often full time) impacting their focus and ability to work effectively on their research. The Department should work towards improving funding opportunities for students.</p>	<p>Discussion on offering more Ph.D. Scholarships is now taking place at the level of the Post-Graduate Studies Faculty (for the restart of Evagoras Scholarships Scheme). Our department representative there is pushing for this. We are thankful for your suggestion and will make use of it for arguing for the support of PhD Scholarships.</p> <p>Note also that PhD students are currently offered the possibility to work as paid teaching-assistants for up to 1,000E per month during the teaching period. Furthermore, the recently recruited academic staff of the Department has contributed to increased funding opportunities through research projects for PhD candidates. This direction will be further pursued.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>2. Students reported feeling isolated and lacking in community due to their small number and the need to work outside of the PhD. The department should consider ways to better integrate PhD students.</p>	<p>This is not easy to change due to the very small number of PhD students, and their multiple other obligations beyond the PhD. For example, currently out of the three enrolled students in this PhD, only one is active. As students also reported to your Committee (p.14), even when meetings were possible, they might prefer not to join. We hope this can be alleviated by increasing student numbers through two MAs which</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>can act as pathways towards the PhD and increase opportunities for collective life for PhD students, namely the already running MA in Peace, Conflict and Democracy, and the MA in Sociology, Social Policy and Intervention (currently in the process of accreditation).</p>	
<p>3. There is no academic professional development programme to support students in developing the key skills required to get an academic job. The department should introduce a series of workshops covering issues like how to write an article for publication, where best to publish their work, how to present their research, how to give a job talk etc.</p>	<p>We will introduce an Annual Seminar covering all these aspects of professional development. This will be obligatory for PhD students in the first-year of their Writing Stage. In addition, students will be supported up to the amount of 500€ in order to attend such seminars online, or abroad.          Relevant Department decision on this taken on 20-3-2024, 2/2024.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>4. The Department should consider adopting a 2-supervisor model with one principal and one secondary supervisor to mitigate the vulnerabilities that can arise from a 1-to-1 dependence. This will also provide more junior members of staff with the opportunity to develop their experience and skills in PhD supervision.</p>	<p>All PhD students have 2 supervisors: the <i>Academic Supervisor</i> and the <i>PHD Research Supervisor</i>. This means that if problems arise with the PhD Research Supervisor, the student could talk to the Academic Supervisor (whose role is more general and does not involve supervision). According to Post-Graduate Studies Regulations (7.4), it is <i>optional but not obligatory</i> to have two PhD Research Supervisors. From now on incoming students will be further informed about this and encouraged to take up the option of the second supervisor. In addition, and to ensure that 1-to-1 dependency is reduced even more, we shall strengthen the Role of the</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>3-member Research Proposal Committee. Apart from the Research Proposal, the students will subsequently also submit a Report after six months into the Research Stage and another report (or writing sample) after six months into the Writing Stage to all the three members of this Committee. Once into the Research Stage, the students will have at least an annual meeting with the two members of this committee (other than the main supervisor) and be provided with feedback. This entails the engagement of more colleagues, including younger ones, in the PhD process. It further strengthens possibilities for students' gaining interdisciplinary perspectives. Relevant Department decision on this taken on 20-3-2024, 2/2024.</p>	
<p>5. There is very limited information on the Department website about the selection criteria and the content of the PhD programme. The Department should regularly update the website to ensure that the information is clear, accurate, up-to-date and easily accessible.</p>	<p>All sections of the English version of our Department website have been updated and now include more detailed information. Following the committee's specific recommendations, our website now clarifies that PhD applicants should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hold a postgraduate degree in Sociology or associated disciplines</li> <li>• have good knowledge of English and</li> <li>• and have identified a potential supervisor who will agree to supervise them before applying to the programme.</li> </ul>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



	<p>The edited website now provides clear information on the path that candidates should follow, the comprehensive exam they should pass before proceeding to the research stage of the programme, the whole application process and the graduation requirements.</p> <p>Part-time study and English language now appear clearly as options. All noted changes will soon appear on our Greek website as well.</p> <p>You may see the updated website here: <a href="https://www.ucy.ac.cy/sap/programmes-of-study/ph-d-sociology/?lang=en">https://www.ucy.ac.cy/sap/programmes-of-study/ph-d-sociology/?lang=en</a></p>	
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## 2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

Compliance Summary: The External Committee found all aspects compliant (Process of teaching and learning and student-centered teaching methodology, Student assessment) except from 2.2 Practical Training (Partially Compliant)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>1. The committee would recommend having a primary and a secondary supervisor to reduce vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>We respond to this above 1.4. To reiterate, please note that all PhD students already have 2 supervisors: the <i>Academic Supervisor</i> and the <i>PHD Research Supervisor</i>. This means that if problems arise with the PhD Research Supervisor, the student could talk to the Academic Supervisor (whose role is more general and does not involve supervision). According to Post-Graduate Studies Regulations (7.4), it is <i>optional but not obligatory</i> to have two PhD Research Supervisors. From now on incoming students will be further informed about this and encouraged to take up the option of the second supervisor. In addition, and to ensure that 1-to-1 dependency is reduced even more, we shall strengthen the Role of the 3-member Research Proposal Committee. Apart from the Research Proposal, the students will subsequently also submit a Report after six months into the Research Stage and another report (or writing sample) after six months into the Writing Stage to all the three members of this Committee. Once into the Research Stage, the students will have at least an</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



	<p>annual meeting with the two members of this committee (other than the main supervisor) and be provided with feedback. This also entails the engagement of more colleagues, including younger ones, in the PhD process. It further strengthens possibilities for students' gaining interdisciplinary perspectives.</p> <p>Relevant Department decision on this taken on 20-3-2024, 2/2024.</p>	
<p>2. Clearer progression milestones should be incorporated into the structure of the PhD programme, such as annual progression reports. With the current number of students the informal approach is adequate, however if the number increased a more structured approach is necessary.</p>	<p>We currently already have in place a structured process for 6-month progression reports. These are submitted from the PhD Supervisor and placed in each student's progress file. Given the changes we institute with the additional reports (to all three members of the Research Proposal Committee, see 1.4 above) as well as meetings with them, this process is now substantially strengthened with additional progression milestones.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>3. In order to make the PhD project a less solitary trajectory the Department could consider offering the PhD students workshops on subjects they do recognise as beneficial for their PhD project</p>	<p>We respond to this above at 1.3. To reiterate, we will introduce an additional Annual Seminar covering aspects of professional development (in addition, that is, to the existing Annual Seminar where all PhD students present their academic work to the department). This will be obligatory for PhD students in the first-year of their Writing Stage. Also, students will be supported up to the amount of</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>500€ in order to attend seminars online or abroad on topics which they consider beneficial for their PhD project.</p> <p>Relevant Department decision on this taken on 20-3-2024, 2/2024.</p>	
<p>4. Adequate scholarships would greatly benefit the PhD students. The Department might advocate for this to the leadership of the University</p>	<p>We respond to this at 1.1. To reiterate, discussion on offering more Ph.D. Scholarships is now taking place at the level of the Post-Graduate Studies Faculty (for the restart of Evagoras Scholarships Scheme). Our department representative there is pushing for this. We are thankful for your suggestion and will make use of it for arguing for the support of PhD Scholarships.</p> <p>Note also that PhD students are currently offered the possibility to work as paid teaching-assistants for up to 1,000€ per month during the teaching period. Furthermore, the recently recruited academic staff of the Department has contributed to increased funding opportunities through research projects for PhD candidates. This direction will be further pursued.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Compliance Results Summary: In this section, the External Evaluation Committee found all aspects Compliant (Teaching staff recruitment and development, Teaching staff number and status, Synergies of teaching and research).

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>1. We strongly suggest providing the option of a PhD by publication, with teaching staff providing a skills suite of workshops and seminars to prepare PhD students on key topics such as how to structure a PhD, how to publish in high-impact international journals, how to network successfully.</p>	<p>Currently both University Regulations and the Accreditation Body (CYQAA) Regulations do not allow for this. Both explicitly mention a Thesis. We have been informed by the Post-Graduate Studies Faculty that the PhD by publication option was discussed in the past but it was not approved. We will put forward this suggestion at the Department Meeting and depending on its position at higher levels. For eventual approval, this will require a change in both University Regulations and the regulations of the Accreditation Body itself, which is the highest body. For the workshops, we agree and we shall offer the necessary seminars (see also above 1.3).</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>2. At least 1 further permanent teaching staff is needed once the proposed MA in Sociology launches. This new postgraduate programme is essential as a pathway towards the PhD.</p>	<p>Decisions regarding the allocation of Permanent Positions are taken on University Level on the basis of an algorithm focusing on teaching needs. So we reasonably expect that when the new MA starts or is about to start a position will be allocated. We thank the Committee for this suggestion and we will make use of it in due time to support our argumentation about the Department's teaching needs.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>3.Improve the promotion criteria and ensure that teaching staff are being rewarded for supervision at all levels when applying for promotion. The present model is not in line with international best practice. At present only 1 successfully supervised PhD student is required for promotion to full professor.</p>	<p>This will necessitate a change in University Regulations. Discussion on how to receive credit for supervision at all levels has now been initiated at level of the Faculty by the Dean who was present during the early part of our meeting. The first discussion on this took place at the Faculty Meeting on 20-3-2024, 5/2024. It was decided that the Dean will request the relevant data from all Departments in our Faculty and this will be discussed again at the Faculty Meeting.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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#### 4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

(ESG 1.4)

Compliance Results Summary: The External Evaluation Committee found Student Progression, Student Recognition, Student Certification aspects as Compliant, while Student Admission/Processes and Criteria as Partially Compliant.

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>1. The PhD Dissertation is compulsory to be a monograph and the opportunities for publishing articles during the PhD years are limited. The teaching staff should encourage and support more students writing articles during those years.</p>	<p>To an extent, students are already encouraged to publish before they finish their Ph.D., on an ad-hoc basis however. We expect that with the workshops geared towards publications (see 1.3) more publications during the PhD will result. In addition, 500E towards publication expenses will be offered to each PhD student (towards proof reading, translation, etc.) Relevant Department decision on this taken on 20-3-2024, 2/2024.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>2. Even though there are efforts from the Department to bring the students together through conferences and workshops, there is a lack of interest. The Department could work more in this direction, in order to create a sense of community and professional culture opportunities for the PhD students.</p>	<p>Please see our comments on 1.2 and 1.3. in light also of the very small number of students. In short, we would hope to alleviate this through the Professional Development Seminars and by gradually increasing student numbers.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>3. In regards to their progression and professional development, the students mentioned that there are workshops offered with 'how to' thematic areas but these are organized by the Student Welfare Services and not from the Department, therefore they were general and not specific to their discipline.</p>	<p>We understand and agree. The Professional Development Seminars will include specialized workshops by academics, related to topics like publications in Sociology and/or the PhD students' thematic areas.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



Click or tap here to enter text.	While there was no specific recommendation on this, in response to the comments on top of p. 24 regarding more clarity on processes, criteria and the webpage, we have now upgraded the website to make these explicit. (see 1.5 previously)	Choose level of compliance:
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## 5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Compliance Results Summary: In this section the External Evaluation Committee found all aspects as Compliant: Teaching and Learning Resources, Physical Resources, Human Support Resources, and Student Support Resources.

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>A lack of adequately funded scholarships is a severe limitation on the recruitment of students. The need to work (often full-time) distracts students focus away from their research and prolongs the PhD.</p>	<p>Please see 1.1 above for our actions on this. To reiterate, discussion on offering more Ph.D. Scholarships is now taking place at the level of the Post-Graduate Studies Faculty (for the restart of Evagoras Scholarships Scheme). Our department representative there is pushing for this. We are thankful for your suggestion and will make use of it for arguing for the support of PhD Scholarships.</p> <p>Note also that PhD students are currently offered the possibility to work as paid teaching-assistants for up to 1,000E per month during the teaching period. Furthermore, the recently recruited academic staff of the Department has contributed to increase funding opportunities through research projects for PhD candidates. This direction will be further pursued</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>A set of workshops addressing key skills needed for success in the academic labour market would help promote integration and community within the department and better equip students to succeed post-PhD.</p>	<p>Please see 1.3 above for this. To reiterate, we will introduce an Annual Seminar covering aspects of professional development. This will be obligatory for PhD students in the first-year of their Writing Stage. In addition, students will be supported up to the amount of 500E in order to attend relevant seminars online,</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



	or abroad, according to their own needs. Relevant Department decision on this taken on 20-3-2024, 2/2024	
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## 6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Compliance Results Summary: The External Evaluation Committee found all sections as Compliant: Selection Criteria and Requirements, Proposal and Dissertation, Supervision and Committees.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>1.A set of workshops addressing key skills needed for success in the academic labour market would help promote integration and community within the department and better equip students to succeed post-PhD.</p>	<p>Please see 1.3 above for this. To reiterate, we will introduce an Annual Seminar covering aspects related to professional development and skills. This will be obligatory for PhD students in the first-year of their Writing Stage. In addition, students will be supported up to the amount of 500E in order to attend such seminars online, or abroad to enrich their skills.            Relevant Department decision on this taken on 20-3-2024, 2/2024</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>2.More scholarships/funding need to be made available to attract high-calibre students and to ensure timely completion of the PhD (typically within 3-4 years max) to remain internationally competitive. This will ease the burden on students having to look for external work during their PhD studies.</p>	<p>Please see 1.1 above for our actions on this. To reiterate, discussion on offering more Ph.D. Scholarships is now taking place at the level of the Post-Graduate Studies Faculty (for the restart of Evagoras Scholarships Scheme). Our department representative there is pushing for this. We are thankful for your suggestion and will make use of it for arguing for the support of PhD Scholarships.            Note also that PhD students are currently offered the possibility to work as paid teaching-assistants for up to 1,000E per month during the teaching period. Furthermore, the</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>recently recruited academic staff of the Department has contributed to increase funding opportunities through research projects for PhD candidates. This direction will be further pursued</p>	
<p>3.The Department should work to create opportunities for all staff for gaining experience in PhD supervision as part of their professional development and this should be duly recognized when it comes to university promotions.</p>	<p>Please see 3.3 above. The issue of further recognition of supervision at PhD as well as other levels will necessitate a change in University Regulations. Discussion on how to receive adequate recognition for supervision has now been initiated at level of the Faculty by the Dean who was present during the early part of our meeting. The first discussion on this took place at the Faculty Meeting on 20-3-2024, 5/2024. It was decided that the Dean will request the relevant data from all Departments in our Faculty and this will be discussed again at the Faculty Meeting          Additional supervising experience and opportunities will be gained through the changes we institute in 1.4. From now on incoming students will be encouraged to take up the option of the second supervisor. In addition, we shall strengthen the Role of the 3-member Research Proposal Committee. Apart from the Research Proposal, the students will subsequently also submit a Report after six months into the Research Stage and another report (or writing sample) after six months into the Writing Stage to all the three members of this Committee. Once into the Research Stage, the</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>students will have at least an annual meeting with the two members of this committee (other than the main supervisor) and be provided with feedback. This entails the engagement of more colleagues, including younger ones, in the PhD supervising process. It further strengthens possibilities for students' gaining interdisciplinary perspectives.</p> <p>Relevant Department decision on this taken on 20-3-2024, 2/2024.</p>	
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## 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>The PhD in Sociology at the University of Cyprus is a unique and successful programme with several strengths including: annual PhD workshops to provide detailed feedback to PhD scholars and interaction between staff and students, teaching opportunities in the form of teaching on the undergraduate programme.</p>	<p>We thank you for the report, fruitful discussions and useful comments.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>However, the EEC also noted several areas for improvement including: first and foremost Sociology should offer a PhD by publication (e.g. paper-based approach) as it boosts employability and career progression, accompanied by a clear policy on how to publish individually or together with the supervisor.</p> <p>We also believe that Sociology staff should offer workshops and seminars to prepare students in a more structured way for the PhD journey including how to publish, how to network, how to structure a PhD, how to manage a project, and how to manage one's time.</p> <p>Significantly more funding/scholarships is needed to attract high-calibre PhD students.</p>	<p>On PhD by publication: please see our response in 3.1. We will initiate discussion at the level of the Department but the issue will eventually necessitate a change in both University Regulations and of the Accreditation body itself, CYQAA. Should this eventually get the go-ahead, we fully agree on the need for clarity regarding possible joint publications with the supervisor.</p> <p>On specialized workshops and seminars: please see our response in 1.3. We will institute these on academic issues. On issues like managing time we will encourage our PhD students to register to seminars that are offered routinely by the University. All PhD students are already notified about these seminars.</p> <p>On funding and scholarships see our response in 1.1</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>Sociology should also further increase opportunities for PhD supervision for all staff.</p>	<p>Increasing opportunities for PhD supervision for all staff will also depend on increasing our intake of PhD students. We have suggested in 1.2 how this could eventually take place, including pathways through our new MAs. We also hope that if discussions at the level of the Faculty proceed positively and eventually the University decides that some kind of credit is awarded for PhD supervisions (see 3.3 above), this can also motivate more members of staff to seek and/or take on Ph.D. students. Finally, the changes proposed in 1.4 entail more engagement for staff in PhD supervision (through the enlarged role of the Three-Member Research Proposal Committee).</p>	
<p>Overall, we found the PhD in Sociology programme adequate. Our impression is that teaching and administrative staff are very enthusiastic and committed to the programme and that students have recognised and appreciated the many positive changes that have occurred since the previous EEC visit in February 2019. The programme corresponds to the EQF and is compliant in most areas of evaluation.</p>	<p>Thank you. We hope we have responded adequately to your recommendations with appropriate changes.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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C.



#### D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Associate Professor Iasonas Lambrianou	Department Chair	
Professor Yiannis Papadakis	PhD in Sociology Coordinator	
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**Date:** 22/04/2024

