

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 1.07.2024

## Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Cyprus

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

**In Greek:**

Πτυχίο Πολιτικής Επιστήμης

**In English:**

BA in Political Science

- **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 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 <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>First, the department would benefit greatly from more funding to improve the quality and range of the programs they offer. There appears to exist an over-reliance on non-permanent teaching staff.</p>	<p>We have formally submitted requests for additional tenured or tenure-tracked positions at our department with emphasis on research subjects that will substantially benefit the BA in Political Science either directly or indirectly.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Second, the formalisation of assessment procedures would further ensure quality and address issues of student dispute settlement if any.</p>	<p>First, course evaluation questionnaires ask for student feedback on exam methods and overall course convenor performance. As we have had opportunity to discuss during the on-site visit, student satisfaction, as documented in their evaluations, is high.</p> <p>Second, there is some formalization of assessment procedures, at least as regards research essays (e.g., as documented in our "Study Guide/Handbook").</p> <p>Third, the university general study rules do not allow much room for settling disputes between students and course convenors. Still, students are encouraged to speak with the BA Programme Coordinator and the Department's Chairperson, to make sure that the course convenors do offer feedback on grades. There is some flexibility in the grading system, which is reflected in the fact that instructors are allowed to change their grades a few days or even weeks after submission.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Third, encouraging a larger number of students to undertake the dissertation path would improve their research skills and prepare them better for the market.</p>	<p>First, to encourage students to undertake a dissertation, we are already exempting those who opt for a dissertation from two specialization courses.</p> <p>Second, as per the application dossier, with the accreditation of the revised BA programme, we are</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>introducing two (capped) seminars during their third and fourth year to focus more on research and writing skills.</p> <p>Third, we have converted the existing course SPS 351 Academic Research and Writing in Political Science into a seminar.</p> <p>Fourth, students are encouraged to speak with their Academic Advisors for guidance on the possibility of undertaking the dissertation.</p> <p>Finally, we will explore the possibility of providing an award for the best dissertation within the academic year 2024-2025.</p>	
<p>Fourth, the inclusion or further systematization of methods courses would also benefit the department in this respect.</p>	<p>First, starting with the academic year 2024-2025, we have introduced tutoring sessions to the SPS 151 – Introduction to Political Science. These sessions will provide support to first-year students for research and writing.</p> <p>Second, as per the application dossier, with the accreditation of the revised BA programme, we are introducing an additional methods course. Practically, we are breaking the existing SPS 157 Political Analysis and Methodology into two courses: SPS 157 Quantitative Methods in Political Science and SPS 158 Qualitative Methods in Political Science. This will double the time that students spend on methods courses.</p> <p>Third, to improve student’s research skills, we have converted SPS 351 into a seminar, as already noted earlier.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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**2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment**  
*(ESG 1.3)*

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>While the fact that much discretion is left to individual members of staff entails flexibility, on the other hand the absence of greater coordination and/or more systematic assessment procedures can be improved. Specifically, the department could focus more on practices to make assessment more consistent. Practical training is done through the placement in partnership with high quality stakeholders. However practical training could be enhanced by more systematic focus on employability skills and methods.</p>	<p>First, the Department frequently discusses and exchanges ideas on assessment procedures within the institutional framework. Still, we state our strong commitment to improving our assessment practices.</p> <p>Second, the primary aim of the Internship Program is to improve student’s employability skills and methods. This is why those who receive, and successfully complete, an Internship placement are exempted from two specialization courses (12 ECTS). This is meant to signal the emphasis on professional development. We inform stakeholders that students are there to learn, develop, and acquire experience. To our satisfaction, stakeholders often report that our students are of much higher quality than other students or even recent hires. Still, the two method courses in combination with the three seminars during their third and fourth years that we are introducing, as we have already indicated above, are expected to provide more systematic focus on transversal skills. We should also note that the Department has a Placement Committee which oversees agreements with stakeholders, meets with students, and has frequent interaction with stakeholders on what the requisite skills are.</p> <p>Third, students are encouraged to seek opportunities for further skill development and practical application by supporting the participation in UN and EU simulations. For example, for the academic year 2023-2024, the Department supported delegations to two such simulations.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>Fourth, students are also departmentally as well as institutionally encouraged to seek opportunities for further skill development and practical application by recognizing participation to various UCY, Erasmus+, or YUFE workshops, seminars, and other courses by awarding credits which count towards their BA requirements (typically 1-3 ECTS, corresponding to 25-90 hours of participation).</p> <p>Finally, research-oriented students are encouraged to participate in faculty research activities. They undertake various tasks, such as transcription, data collection, dataset normalization, etc.</p>	
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**3. Teaching staff**  
(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>There does not appear to be a systematic procedure in place for staff development. Addressing this issue by establishing more structured procedures for promotion, as well as for staff development and training, would be beneficial. As previously mentioned, to tackle the current understaffing challenges, it would be advantageous to develop a long-term hiring strategy that aligns with the department's research, teaching, and EDI needs. Additionally, it is important to note that there are currently no female professors among the staff.</p>	<p>First, staff development is regulated and monitored by university institutions (Centre for Teaching and Learning) rather than intra-departmental or intra-programmatic processes. The Department informs about and encourages participation.</p> <p>Second, the Department participates in the ECPR network which provides training/methods schools to which faculty members can attend.</p> <p>Third, the gender imbalance as regards the Political Science staff is noted and frequently discussed intra-departmentally. We opt for inclusiveness by making sure that our promotion/hiring committees always include female professors. This became recently a university wide-practice (60% cap on male/female members). In subsequent hiring procedures in Political Science, we will strongly encourage female applicants to apply.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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**4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**  
(ESG 1.4)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Attracting a more diverse group of students from various ethnic backgrounds could enrich the learning environment and foster a more inclusive academic community.</p>	<p>First, entry to the BA in Political Science is regulated by the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth and the Undergraduate Office of the University of Cyprus (mostly via national exams). When we examine applications for entry to our Greek-taught program (for a 2nd BA degree; via internal/external transfers; international exams for diaspora Greeks / diaspora Cypriots / dual-citizenship Cypriots / recognized religious minorities; international transfers), we offer entry to the best candidates from diverse entry paths.</p> <p>Second, a Faculty member supports students with disabilities.</p> <p>Third, the Department of Social and Political Sciences has one of the best track records in the University of Cyprus for attracting Erasmus+ students. As far as the BA in Political Science is concerned, we offer courses in English to encourage inclusivity (e.g. Erasmus+ students).</p> <p>Fourth, we have an Academic Liaison to the UCY International Office and the UCY Young Universities for the Future of Europe Office. This facilitates the exchange of students and faculty.</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 <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Students noted that job opportunities in Cyprus are primarily limited to the public sector. Students are not required to write a thesis (it is optional), and they felt that the program did not equip them with the necessary skills for studying at universities abroad.</p>	<p>First, we run one of the best Internship programs in the University with individualized memoranda and negotiated placements with a variety of host institutions, from the public and private sectors as well as NGOs. We note our commitment to keep improving it. For example, in 2022 the Department has approved to financially support unpaid placements taking place during the Department’s Internship Programme. In 2024, the Department sought and received further financial support from the University of Cyprus.</p> <p>Second, with the introduction of additional seminar courses as well as method courses our students, as we have already indicated earlier, will be better prepared for undertaking a thesis. English courses should also better prepare them for studies abroad – even though Greek-speaking students do not usually enroll in high numbers.</p> <p>Third, we strongly encourage our students to travel via Erasmus+ mobility. We are the only Department with three different Erasmus coordinators (to meet individual student needs in their different study programs) and with more than 50 agreements with European universities.</p> <p>Finally, academic advisors often act as liaisons for studying abroad.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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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

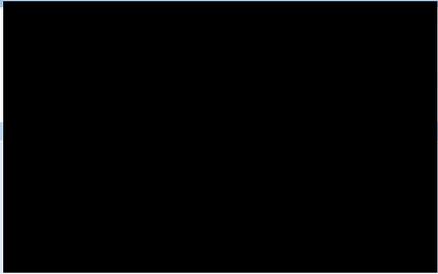
Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
[...]More resources could improve program quality and diversity, reduce reliance on non-permanent staff, and formalize assessment procedures. Additionally, encouraging more students to pursue dissertations and method courses would better prepare them for the job market and research endeavors.[...]	Please see responses in Section 1 above.	Choose level of compliance:
Teaching, learning, and student development are well-supported, with a broad program covering various political science sub-fields. The program attracts high-quality students, and teaching benefits from excellent facilities and flexible methods. However, greater coordination and systematic assessment procedures are needed to ensure consistency. Practical training could be enhanced by focusing on employability skills and methods.	Please see responses in Section 2 above.	Choose level of compliance:
The faculty has a distinguished publication record and international experience, fostering a rich learning environment. However, there's a lack of systematic staff development procedures and female representation among professors. Long-term hiring strategies aligned with research, teaching, and equity needs are recommended.	Please see responses in Section 3 above.	Choose level of compliance:
The department demonstrates a commitment to clear and consistent student support, with transparent admission regulations and application processes. Systematizing method teaching can enhance student experience and employability. [...]	Please see responses in Section 4 above.	Choose level of compliance:
The department provides ample information and state-of-the-art facilities to support student learning. However, a shortage of permanent staff limits module diversity, particularly in the MA	Please see responses in Section 5 above.	Choose level of compliance:

program. Efforts to encourage PhD students to utilize international networks like ECPR for workshops and journal access are needed. Additionally, promoting student work presentation and inviting external speakers online could enhance academic networking at no extra cost.		
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**We take up this opportunity to thank the EEC for their recommendations and their appreciation of the good work we are doing. We are especially grateful for their recognition of the understaffing of the Department and the effects that understaffing has on the BA in Political Science specifically and all the Department’s study programs more generally. Also, we cannot fail to mention the good spirit in, and collaborative attitude with, which the discussion between the EEC and the Political Science faculty on research, teaching, student guidance, and assessment practices took place.**

C.

### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Signature</b>
<b>Professor Philemon Bantimaroudis</b>	Department Chairperson	
<b>Assistant Professor Antis Loizides</b>	BA in Political Science Coordinator	
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