

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 8 November 2023

## Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Department:** Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies
- **Programme of study  
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**  
**In Greek:**  
Πτυχίο στις Τουρκικές Σπουδές  
**In English:**  
BA in Turkish Studies (4 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
<p>1.1. What is especially noticeable is how too much time is devoted to analysing grammar and too little time obtaining crucial oral communication skills at the BA level.</p>	<p>The Department has already established an ad hoc Committee that provided concrete recommendations for the improvement of the method of the teaching of Turkish, especially in the first years. There has been a preliminary discussion of these recommendations on the Department Board Meeting of 8 November 2023. According to the recommendations of the ad hoc Committee, the Department has decided to modify the courses TOM 106, TOM 107 and TOM 206 (Language Exercises I, II and III, offered in the first, second and third semesters) in a manner 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. The change will be effective starting in September 2024.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>1.2. We recommend more use of the language laboratory and more advanced digital methods and better and more up to date technology to assist this aim.</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>1.3. We recommend the Department follow the guideline of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Improved training in speaking Turkish would provide a smoother path of progression from BA to MA.</p>	<p>See point 1.1 above.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>1.4. It would make more sense to have BA students study all three areas of History/Politics, Language, and Literature without specializing.</p>	<p>The Department understands the reasoning of this recommendation. It deems, however, that local conditions and the interests of the students necessitate the presence of directions in the Undergraduate Program. Retaining directions gives focus to a program that is characterized by the study of different disciplines and gives students of diverse interests and backgrounds the opportunity to pursue an early form of specialization according to their inclinations.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>1.5. In addition, the language courses can be distributed across the eight semesters rather than in the first years.</p>	<p>The Department offers language courses until the 6<sup>th</sup> semester of studies. This will be further discussed in relation to the recommendations of the <i>ad hoc</i> committee mentioned in point 1.1.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>1.6. Remedial courses should be offered to the weaker students.</p>	<p>Instructors are always available, upon request, to assist weaker students by providing further instruction and additional material beyond classroom time. Also, master's students are assigned small groups of undergraduate students to assist them in the language courses.</p>	
<p>1.7. Certain information needs to be made readily available to students and the public. This includes pass rates and graduate employment information. Students could be more involved in activities collecting information about student progression and student satisfaction and career paths of graduates.</p>	<p>There are records of such data in the University's Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service. The Department Board appointed two of its academic members as Alumni Liaisons, in order to collect data on current and former students. In this task, they may be assisted by the University's already existing Alumni Association.</p>	
<p>1.8. The formation of an alumni association for the Department would be very</p>	<p>The Department Board appointed two of its academic members as Alumni Liaisons, in order to collect data on current and former students. In this task,</p>	

<p>helpful in providing such information.</p>	<p>they may be assisted by the University's already existing Alumni Association. Alumni are invited to the Department's extracurricular events and many of them attend these events.</p>	
<p>1.9. The university needs to provide clear guidelines and paths of remediation when problems between students and students or students and professors arise.</p>	<p>The Department Board has a mechanism for resolving issues between students and professors in terms of grading: A student may file a complaint to the Department Board, which appoints an ad hoc Committee to investigate and decide on the issue. If the Department's response is not deemed satisfactory, the student may then appeal to higher authority in the University. The University has already an established procedure with specific guidelines, which is to be found in the following link:  <a href="https://www.ucy.ac.cy/qa/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2022/02/Student-Complaints-Management-Policy_English-Translation_25-02-2022.docx">https://www.ucy.ac.cy/qa/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2022/02/Student-Complaints-Management-Policy_English-Translation_25-02-2022.docx</a></p>	

### Findings for BA Programme

The BA 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 BA 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 BA 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/Language/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 stastical

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 BA 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 programme has a precise and well defined set of expected learning outcomes depending on the chosen specialization. The Department offers many public activities including cultural events which are enthusiastically attended by members of the public.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA programme

What is especially noticeable is how too much time is devoted to analysing grammar and too little time obtaining crucial oral communication skills at the BA level. We recommend more use of the language laboratory and more advanced digital methods and better and more up to date technology to assist this aim. We recommend the Department follow the guideline of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Improved training in speaking Turkish would provide a smoother path of progression from BA to MA. It would make more sense to have BA students study all three areas of History/Politics, Language, and Literature without specializing. In addition, the language courses can be distributed across the eight semesters rather than in the first years. Remedial courses should be offered to the weaker students. Certain information needs to be made readily available to students and the public. This includes pass rates and graduate employment information. 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. The university needs to provide clear guidelines and paths of remediation when problems between students and students or students and professors arise.

## **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
2.1. We recommend adopting a new methodological approach to teaching Turkish grammar. The balance between theory and practice is not properly balanced. We suggest the students receive much less theory knowledge (i.e. grammar) and much more speaking and writing practice.	<b>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.</b>	Choose level of compliance:

<p>2.2. More oral assessments would compel students to improve their communication skills.</p>	<p>As expressed above, at point 2.1, the Department will modify its Curriculum, introducing more courses designed to improve the students' oral and communication skills.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>2.3. It would also be helpful if students had the option to take elective courses that allow them to specialize in teaching foreign languages.</p>	<p>This is one of the Department's priorities. One member of the staff is offering seminars on the teaching of the Turkish language, while students can also take free electives on the teaching of foreign languages from other departments. It is expected that with the introduction of the new Master's program and the overhaul of the existing one, which will be focused on Linguistics and Literature, this problem will be conclusively resolved.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>2.4. In addition, class size (up to 30) is too large to effectively teach language at a beginner's level. Hiring additional staff to break the class into two groups of 15 would solve this problem.</p>	<p>In addition to our current Special Teaching Staff, the Department is currently hiring the services of a language teacher as a Special Scientist, so that language classes may be split into smaller sections. The hiring of a new member of the Department as Special Teaching Staff, if allocated by the University, is expected to alleviate this problem.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

### Findings for BA programme

On the basis of the application, the onsite visit, and video of an actual teaching lesson we determine that pedagogy mostly meets the objectives and intended learning outcomes of mastering the Turkish language. The instructors creatively apply various methodologies and technologies to enable student learning, however, there is possibility for improvement in the Turkish-language courses. Student-centred teaching methodology as well as theory and practice are creatively combined in lessons related to literature, history and politics. Assignments at home and in the classroom meet the needs of the students. Unfortunately, assessment on the Turkish language courses tend to be based on written rather than oral evaluation. Optional excursions reinforce what students learn in the classroom and provide opportunities to apply what they study to practical situations. Students are able to meet regularly with their professors.

### Strengths for BA programme

The curriculum is divided into the core areas of History/Politics and Language/Literature and teaching staff divided by specialty to only cover their expertise in the courses they teach. This means they are able to apply their expertise to the educational development of their students, transferring the outcomes of their research to the classroom. Staff take a great interest in the intellectual development of their students. Most of the teachers use innovative teaching methods and a great variety of learning environments. The examination





papers shown to us during the onsite visit demonstrates that the teaching staff put a great deal of efforts into basing their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes.

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

We recommend adopting a new methodological approach to teaching Turkish grammar. The balance between theory and practice is not properly balanced. We suggest the students receive much less theory knowledge (i.e. grammar) and much more speaking and writing practice. More oral assessments would compel students to improve their communication skills. It would also be helpful if students had the option to take elective courses that allow them to specialize in teaching foreign languages. In addition, class size (up to 30) is too large to effectively teach language at a beginner's level. Hiring additional staff to break the class into two groups of 15 would solve this problem.

### 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.</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>
<p>3.4. We encourage the university administration to speed up the recruitment processes and appoint new staff members without delay.</p>	<p>This is a permanent demand of the Department, but it lies entirely within the responsibility of the University. 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>

### Findings for BA programme

Students regularly evaluate the teaching performance of their instructors that help them to improve their courses and teaching methodologies. 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 five professors, two lecturers, and two special 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 BA programme

Given the small number of the teaching staff in the Department, staff members are involved in teaching in all three cycles in their own specialization that provides continuity in education from the student's perspective. Visiting professors further enrich the offering of the Department with their specialized knowledge. The School ensures the competence of the teaching staff. The School ensures the competence of the teaching staff. The School ensures the competence of the teaching staff. The number of staff is suitable for offering Turkish studies. That the majority are full time offers stability for the programme. Visiting staff enhance the Department, offering new approaches to the programme.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA 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. We encourage the university administration to speed up the recruitment processes and appoint new staff members without delay.

#### 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 BA programme

Regulations concerning admission and progression are appropriate and regulated by law. There is a very good professor/student ratio which makes it possible for individual development of students. 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. During the onsite visit we were informed that there is a surprisingly high dropout rate of BA students. We also discovered during the onsite visit that there is much unhappiness about the Turkish language pedagogy. Large class sizes, particularly in introductory Turkish language courses, hinder student learning. Specific admission requirements are available online on the website of the Department and regularly updated, these are Graduation Requirements, Examination Regulations, Assessment and Grading.

##### Strengths for BA 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. There is a very good professor-student ratio which makes it possible for the students to be informed about university regulations, student certifications and other information directly from their professors.

##### Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA 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. Moving to the new campus will be beneficial for students. Students will be afforded better teaching infrastructure.	<b>This is also another 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.</b>	Choose level of compliance:
5.2. More interactive lectures would be welcomed by students.	<b>The Department will encourage the academic and teaching staff to attend courses offered by the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning (ΚΕ.ΔΙ.ΜΑ.) to improve the quality of the teaching offered.</b>	Choose level of compliance:
5.3. The School could better advertise the extra-academic services available to students. They appear to be relatively unaware of what is available outside the Department	<b>The Department agrees with this and believes that this is partly a result of the isolation of the Department in the Old Campus. The problem will be hopefully resolved by moving the Department's classes to the New Campus. Additionally, the Department, the School and the University informs students about all activities through emails and the social media.</b>	Choose level of compliance:
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Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Choose level of compliance:

### Findings for BA programme

Teaching is undertaken on the old campus. Although the latest technology is used, the buildings do not support teaching of languages and lab work. On our onsite visit, we were not shown the Department, classrooms, study spaces, computer labs, language labs, offices, or meeting rooms. We were only shown the library. We were shown a video of a class which began with a twentyminute lecture, and then included twenty-minutes of student-centred learning. Students are assigned mentors. The syllabi we were given offer



clear learning objectives and learning outcomes. Non-academic services are available to the students on campus.

#### Strengths for BA programme

Students' mobility within and across universities is encouraged and supported. Non-traditional students, including part-time and mature students, are also supported.

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

Moving to the new campus will be beneficial for students. Students will be afforded better teaching infrastructure. More interactive lectures would be welcomed by students. The School could better advertise the extra-academic services available to students. They appear to be relatively unaware of what is available outside the Department.

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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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>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>On the Department's Language Laboratory see point 1.2 above. Moreover, the Department will encourage language instructors to attend training on the didactics of Turkish as a Foreign Language.</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>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 above, point 1.4.</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>The Department Board is already aware of the problem of attrition, it is currently discussing its causes and trying to apply the appropriate remedies. Already all members of the staff have met with first-year students, as well as with more advanced students to inform them about the program of study and employment prospects. Furthermore, the Department Board is actively</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	advertising the program to various social groups that may be interested. It is also in touch with the Ministry of Education and school authorities to promote the Department's program to prospective students on the high school level.	
B.5. The Department can be encouraged to better track student progress through their studies through additional evaluation of the programme as a whole.	See above, point 1.7.	Choose level of compliance:
B.6. Members of staff should be freed from being overburdened by School administrative duties that hinder their own career progressions.	See above, point 3.1.	
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.	See above, point 5.1.	
B.8. Increasing the number of PhD students will enhance the learning environment of the Department.	See the relevant section in the form on the PhD Program.	
B.9. It would be to the Department's benefit to encourage more international exchange among staff.	See above, point 3.2.	
B.10. We suggest preparing statistical information about the job prospects and career patterns of alumni.	See above, point 1.7.	

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:

- 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.
- We suggest a better balance between activities teaching grammar on the one hand, and practicing reading, writing and speech on the other.
- 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.
- The Department should analyse the cause of the high attrition rate at the BA level and take necessary measures to reduce it.
- The Department can be encouraged to better track student progress through their studies through additional evaluation of the programme as a whole.
- Members of staff should be freed from being overburdened by School administrative duties that hinder their own career progressions.
- Moving to the new campus will enhance the learning and teaching environment of the Department and interaction with other staff, student and Departments.
- Increasing the number of PhD students will enhance the learning environment of the Department.
- 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

