

Doc. 300.1.3

Date: .....

# Feedback report from EEC experts

- **Higher education institution:**

University of Cyprus

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **Programme of study (Name, ECTS, duration, cycle)**

**In Greek:** Προπτυχιακό πρόγραμμα Κλασικών Σπουδών

**In English:** Undergraduate Programme of Classics

- **Language of instruction:** Greek

- **Programme's status**

**New programme:** .....

**Currently operating:** ✓

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 and 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015 and N. 47(I)/2016].

#### A. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Richard Hunter	Regius Professor of Greek	University of Cambridge
Irene de Jong	Professor of Greek	University of Amsterdam
Damien Nelis	Professor of Latin	University of Geneva
Panagiota Chatzinikola	Student	Open University of Cyprus

#### B. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The EEC based on the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1) and the Higher Education Institution’s response (Doc.300.1.2), must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *Below each assessment area the EEC must circle the degree of compliance.*

## 1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

### EEC's recommendations

1. The Department recognizes that its strengths are in traditional philology and, for historical reasons, much of the content of the programme is geared to teaching prospective high-school teachers. This is perfectly understandable, but it means that several of the courses do not reflect the current state of research in Classics, and in particular the now standard interdisciplinary and holistic approach to the literature, history and art of antiquity. We recommend that thought be given to ensuring that all undergraduates are exposed to the full range of the modern study of Classics, including classical art and classical reception..
2. The publicly available website seems both out-of-date and relatively meagre in the information it provides. It may well be that more detailed information is available digitally to current and prospective students, but thought should be given to improving the ways in which the programme is publicly advertised.
3. There are strong personal links with other Cypriot and international scholars, but institutional links are currently weak. In particular, it is surprising that there appears to be no fruitful collaboration with the Open University of Cyprus. We recommend that serious thought be given to building pan-Cypriot and international links at institution level..

### HEI's response

1. We appreciate the Committee's thoughtful comments, informed by its members' great experience and concern for the future of Classics worldwide. We wholeheartedly agree on the importance of interdisciplinary and holistic approaches and already apply such in many of our courses, as seen, e.g., in our "Application", pp. 118, 122, 126, 129. There is of course scope for improvement, so we have decided:
  - a. to request a course in the 'History of Ancient Art' from the Department of History and Archaeology; implementation being an internal matter of that Department, we cannot provide a time frame.
  - b. to offer an elective course in classical reception in the academic year 2020/21, by employing a Special Scientist with the relevant expertise. The course will then be assessed for permanent inclusion in our programme, provided of course that the University will be willing to grant the necessary funding.
2. The Departmental Board has set up an internal committee, consisting of D. Kaltsas, Ch. Kyriakou and our student Anna Xenophontos, tasked with proposing specific improvements; its proposals will be discussed in the second meeting of the Departmental Board in October with a view to immediate implementation.
3. This recommendation concerns the University of Cyprus as a whole rather than the Department or the Programme in particular. In the past the central authorities of the University of Cyprus and the Open University of Cyprus envisaged the prospect of a merger between them, but those efforts met with no success. Currently, there do exist various forms of cooperation at the Master's and PhD levels, but of

course there is scope for improvement. Therefore, the Department has decided to work towards (i) building more joint Master's programmes with other Departments and Universities in Cyprus and abroad, and (ii) increasing its Erasmus+ International cooperation. The increase in both cases is planned to be on a scale of 50%, by 2022.

**Please circle one of the following for:**

**Study programme and study programme's design and development**

***Fully compliant***

## **2. Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3)**

### **EEC's recommendations**

1. The Department itself recognizes and is very concerned by falling student numbers, caused both by changes in the arrangements for the appointment of high-school teachers and by more general directions in Cypriot society. The Department is already planning new courses which should attract students whose primary aim is not secondary education; this seems a very sensible way forward and we strongly recommend that the University support these initiatives. We also recommend that great energy be put into public outreach (lectures, cultural events etc, the display of Cypriot antiquities) to raise the profile of the Department and the attractiveness of the subject.
2. The committee was very impressed by the research activities of the full-time members of staff, but— while recognising that this is an undergraduate programme - observed that research insights were reflected in teaching to a lesser extent than would be ideal. The teaching of research skills did not appear to be central to the undergraduate programme, but we imagine that this is more a matter for the Masters programme.
3. From what the committee was shown, it would appear that the Department does not make use of the full functionality of Blackboard. Serious consideration should be given to a much greater use of digital resources in teaching and for University-level training and support for such extension of current practice.

## HEI's response

1. We thank the Committee for their sensible recommendations. With regard to the numbers of our students, we are confident that the new competitive appointment procedures of state-school teachers will attract more students in the near future, given our graduates' very high rate of success in the recent appointments (see "Application", p. 27). With regard to outreach activities, we regret that the format of the "Application" left space only for a very brief and general mention of the Department's work in this crucial area ("Application", pp. 27–8). Different members of the academic staff are involved in different outreach activities:1 we visit high schools either to present our programme to pupils, teachers and career counsellors or to give them lectures on academic subjects; we organize courses, lectures and conferences of such a form that are able to attract a wider audience, even from as different fields as mathematics, architecture etc; we train state-school teachers in collaboration with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute; we offer courses related to our expertise in collaboration with the Cyprus Tourism Organization. With this encouragement from the Committee we intend to continue these activities and put them on a more systematic basis.
2. The development of research skills is indeed a priority in our Master's programme, but we feel that it is in no way neglected in our undergraduate programme either: in as early as their third semester, our students must take a course on "Research Methods in Classics" (AEF 103, described on pp. 57–9 of the "Application"); in their third and fourth year, they must take a great number of higher level and seminar courses (two in Historical Linguistics ["Application", pp. 121–31] and no fewer than seven in Greek and Latin), partly or wholly graded on written work; in this they are required to demonstrate their mastery of a wide range of research skills (using print and electronic resources, engaging critically with scholarly literature, citing it correctly, structuring a research paper, etc.). With regard to teaching, both permanent and temporary staff take care to keep their teaching in line with the latest insights of the corresponding research area (cf. the bibliography section of each of the course descriptions in the "Application").
3. While it is true that some members of the teaching staff make extensive use of Blackboard facilities (cf. "Application", pp. 117–31), some others have so far preferred to rely on alternative practices for the management of their courses. We do, however, take the Committee's point, and thus have decided on the following measures:
  - a. the Blackboard app. technician (G. Kappos) will be invited to give a presentation of the various features of this tool in the first or second week of next semester;
  - b. immediately after the afore-mentioned presentation, all teaching staff will include Blackboard in the management of their courses;
  - c. at the beginning of the next spring semester, the teaching staff will discuss their experiences of Blackboard use and address any issues. Prof. Panayotou has undertaken to coordinate the whole matter. In this context it is perhaps relevant to note that in general digital resources are regularly used in our teaching as appropriate; cf. "Application", pp. 58–59 and 86.

**Please circle one of the following for:**

## Teaching, learning and student assessment

### *Fully compliant*

#### 3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

##### **EEC's recommendations**

1. Although the number of full-time staff appears adequate for the current programme, it offers no head room for change and/or expansion. We recommend that the University supports increased breadth and interdisciplinarity in the programme by new appointments in targeted areas.

2. The committee received inconsistent information concerning the numbers and status of 'Special Scientists'. Nevertheless, it is clear that the delivery of the programme is heavily dependent upon their excellent contribution; given this situation, the committee was very surprised that it was offered no opportunity to meet these 'Scientists' and to discuss their contribution with them. The Department and the University need to give serious thought to career development for these scholars.

3. The committee received very little information concerning training opportunities in teaching methods, adult education and new technologies; it recommends that the Department institute formalized processes of peer-support and training

##### **HEI's response**

1. We second this recommendation in the strongest possible terms; we do indeed need new appointments, and we hope that the University will examine this as a matter of priority.
2. The status of the 'Special Scientists' is defined by the University Law 144/1989, Part VII, 21(3). Please see briefly "Application", p. 12: 'the positions require a PhD title, are advertised publicly, and concern the teaching of specific courses each semester according to the needs of the Programme' (Regulations made under sections 21 (3) and 32 of the Law, 5.1.1, Part III 13; Statutes 5.1.4). Compensation is on an hourly basis (Statutes 5.1.4.1.6.2). In the current academic year, the number of courses taught by Special Scientists represents a 27.3% of all the courses of the Programme<sup>2</sup> (the maximum allowable percentage of part-time staff in a study programme is 30%). Very soon this percentage will drop, since a newly appointed member of permanent staff, a Latinist, is going to take up her teaching duties in September 2019. We hope that, in the not too distant future, the Department will be authorized by the University to make two more appointments, one in Ancient Greek and one in Latin. Moreover, from 2022 we will need a third appointment in Historical Linguistics to replace the soon-to-retire Linguist. As to the career options of our Special Scientists, we appreciate and share the Committee's concern and note that this has been a matter of debate within the University

for some time now. For our own part, we try to provide them with the best working conditions possible. We support them in their teaching roles within our Department, but also we urge them to regularly participate in the Staff Mobility Project of Erasmus+. We also support them in the pursuit of their own research in various ways: we are always happy to assist them in applying to both internal and external funding bodies, and then to act as supervisors or coordinators of their postdoctoral research. We gladly mention that so far a large percentage of such applications have met with success, and the Department boasts two prestigious research projects funded by the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation, four postdoctoral scholarships awarded by our University etc. Moreover, very recently the Departmental Board (meeting 2/2019, 7.1 and 7.2) accepted the applications of two Special Scientists and thereby funded some of their research activities. In brief, we believe that our temporary staff find in our Department an ideal place to develop their professional potential. It is no coincidence that several of them found permanent jobs at academic institutions in Cyprus and abroad. We deeply regret that the Committee was not given the chance to meet the Special Scientists, but it should be noted that the schedule was not set up by us.

3. We are sorry we missed the opportunity to inform the Committee of the specialized unit of our University, the Centre for Teaching & Learning. This Centre supports all staff who teach, and its webpage is to be found at <http://www.ucy.ac.cy/ctl/en/> — please see under ‘Activities ... For Instructors’. Some of the older permanent staff have already availed themselves of its rich expertise, whereas new appointments *must* receive teaching consultancy from it. Beyond this, the Departmental Board has decided to institute a process of in-class peer observation and peer consultation, beginning from next semester.

**Please circle one of the following for:**

**Teaching Staff**

***Fully compliant***

#### **4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)**

##### **EEC’s recommendations**

1. The Department itself recognizes that there are currently very few undergraduate exchange programmes taken up; this presents a markedly different picture than before the economic crisis. The language barrier inhibits incoming students and the economic situation often prevents Cypriot students from going abroad. We recommend that active thought be given to increasing such opportunities, and the use of digital technology in the teaching non-Greek speaking students may offer one way forward.

2. Students expressed the view that some teaching experience during the BA years would help the post-graduation transition.

### **HEI's response**

1. Fortunately measures to support student exchange programmes will now be undertaken at the central level of the University — last April the Rector of the University informed the Erasmus coordinators of the Departments that such a policy is underway. With regard to the language barrier, we are confident that our decision to offer at least two courses in English each academic year will be instrumental in attracting a greater number of incoming Erasmus students.
2. In Cyprus everyone who wants to take up a teaching post in state secondary schools must have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in addition to their academic degree. Academic programmes are not usually designed so as to develop teaching skills among their students, for the very good reason that such skills are developed in the context of the aforementioned professional programme. We may add that QTS is operated by the Department of Education of our University (<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/proypiresiaki/>), and that no fewer than three colleagues of our Department (two Hellenists and one Latinist) participate in it by lecturing on the teaching methodologies of Ancient Greek and Latin.

**Please circle one of the following for:**

**Students**

***Fully compliant***

5. **Resources** (ESG 1.6)

### **EEC's recommendations**

Given the great strengths of the new library and its digital resources, the committee recommends that proper training be offered to interested members of the staff of the Department in utilizing these resources for teaching purposes.

### **HEI's response**

Digital resources are an important tool and are already in regular use in many of our courses: cf. e.g. “Application”, p. 58, section ‘Course Content’: ‘4. Digital resources for the classicist’; or the course descriptions in “Application”, pp. 117–131, under ‘Laboratories / week’. There is of course scope for improvement, so we have decided to invite a Library Advisor (Alexia Louka) to give us a presentation of the various digital resources in September.

Please circle one of the following for:

Resources

*Fully compliant*

### C. Conclusions and final remarks

*The EEC must provide constructive conclusions and final remarks.*

The EEC is pleased with the constructive response of the Department, which is also in line with the open and frank attitude of our discussions with them. The EEC believes that, if the Department carries out in good faith the innovations it has suggested along the lines in the Department's response, then Classics should grow and flourish at the University of Cyprus. Finally, the EEC stresses that both the Department and the subject of Classics require and deserve the full support of the government and the University, as the subject is central to Cypriot history and culture; it would be a very great pity if, by failing properly to support the Department, the University missed the opportunity to make itself an international centre for the study of Cypriot culture in all its richness.

#### D. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Richard Hunter</b>	
<b>Irene de Jong</b>	
<b>Damien Nelis</b>	
<b>Panagiota Chatzinikola</b>	

Date: .....15 August 2019.....