

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 16 September 2021

- **Higher Education Institution:**
UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study**
BSc in Civil and Environmental Engineering (4yrs, 240 ECTS, 1st Cycle)

In Greek:
Προπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα Πολιτικού Μηχανικού και Μηχανικού Περιβάλλοντος

In English:
BSc in Civil and Environmental Engineering
- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek, English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):** None



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 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

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 300.1.1/2 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.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Findings for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

Specific information regarding the program is available online and is updated regularly. The faculty-to-student ratio is about 1:10.

The information related to the various programmes of study is publicly accessible through a dedicated website that is constantly updated.

Courses are offered in Greek, excluding particular courses as part of the Erasmus program, which are offered in English; the significant majority of students are Cypriots or of Greek origin.

The university workload is in line with that expressed by ECTS (240 ECTS for 4 academic years). This corresponds to 30 ECTS units per semester and about 25 hours of workload for a student per week.

The academic program is coordinated between 15 appointed faculty members as well as few other scientific personnel mostly with a PhD degree. In Particular, 60% of the existing faculty members teach 2 undergraduate courses per semester. It also appears that some junior faculty teach 3 undergraduate courses per year in addition to other graduate courses.

The drop out rate is, on average, 9.6%, whereas the average course failure rate is 19.4%. The primary reason for dropouts is that most of these students did not have as a first priority the civil engineering discipline when they were admitted through the pancyprian entrance exam.

Statistics since 2007 reveal that a student graduates in about 9 semesters (4-½ years instead of 4 academic years) with a BSc degree.

Students are mostly hired in the private sector. The department has established an alumni center to establish contact with past graduates and identify future needs in their professional development.

Moreover, an alumni survey has been conducted just recently.

With regard to new faculty, an entry program has been established to inform them specifically regarding teaching. Teaching evaluations and their analysis are handled between the respective instructor and department head to ensure a high quality of teaching.

The program is designed to meet the registration requirements of the Scientific and Technical Chamber of Cyprus - ETEK, which is the primary Professional Body that recognizes Engineering Science in Cyprus.

Finally, there are no substantial overlaps between courses. This is generally ensured between faculty of the same subject area.

Strengths for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

1. Professionally accredited degree to practice civil engineering in Cyprus.

2. Attract high caliber students from Cyprus.

3. Well-equipped facilities and computer laboratories to ensure hands-on experience and opportunities for active learning.

4. The department presented several examples involving both practical works along with emphasis on the fundamentals, which is key for the professional development of potential future graduates.

5. Students have opportunities to collaborate in multidisciplinary projects including the capstone project.

6. Large variety of elective courses complementing the core curriculum.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

EEC's comment 1:

1. There seems to be limited access to students outside of Cyprus due to the language of course offerings, which are mostly offered in Greek. However, the department has already identified this as a potential area for improvement over the next 5 years.

HEI's response:

Currently there is no plan to offer the undergraduate program in English due to certain technicalities. Offering the program in English would have allowed to admit students from a variety of countries in the wider region. In the short- and mid-term, the only possibility in increase the number of foreign students if to attract more candidates from Greece.

EEC's comment 2:

2. A water resources engineering faculty would give a great boost to the current program.

HEI's response:

On 15/7/2021, the Department placed a request for the opening of a faculty position at the rank of lecturer or assistant professor with expertise in the field of Hydrology/Water Resources Management (**Annex B1**). The request was recently forwarded from the Rector's Council to the pertinent Personnel and Development Committee and is under examination.

EEC's comment 3:

3. A faculty member in the general area of energy efficiency of buildings would be an asset for the future vision of the department.

HEI's response:

We agree with the assessment of the EEC. The Department has set as a second priority the opening of a faculty position in the field of energy efficiency of buildings.

EEC's comment 4:

4. A faculty member in the transportation discipline could add value to the department with emphasis on transit system design and road safety among others.

HEI's response:

A second faculty position in the field of transportation engineering (i.e. in addition to the existing one) is not part of the strategic plan of the Department. However, there is currently an effort at Engineering School level to open a faculty position in the related, more advanced field of "smart cities". Independently of which department such position is assigned to, the CEE will benefit considerably from such a hiring, both with respect to courses offered to our students and research-wise (through potential synergies).

EEC's comment 5:

5. Some rebalancing in course allocations is necessary; depending on the discipline, some junior faculty appear to be somewhat overloaded with a number of core undergraduate courses. The role of a faculty advisor should be formally identified to ensure a seamless integration of junior faculty and walk them through the tenure process.

HEI's response:

The normal course load is 4 courses per year per faculty member. Most faculty members teach two or more elective (undergraduate and postgraduate) courses and two or less core courses with inevitably large audience. This will be set to be the norm for all faculty without exceptions, in order to not have uneven distribution of course load.

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

Findings for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

There is an optional practical training course, which is very much appreciated by the students. These initiatives create a good connection to practical applications. The syllabus appears to have a balance between theoretical and applied/technical courses.

Undergraduates are involved in research, through their final year thesis, which often includes interactions with the Department's PhD students and graduated students who may be working in research related projects in industry. Moreover, it appears that a number of students are involved in experimental activities within the University's laboratories. Some of the students have participated in research internships abroad with co-supervision from both the host university as well as university of Cyprus.

Courses are evaluated on a basis of 50% final exam and 50% of coursework and/or a midterm. Lecturers appear to have a flexibility on how the coursework marks are distributed among assignments, class participation, labs and/or midterms. This ensures constant feedback to the students throughout the semester. Moreover, faculty holds regular office hours. The students appreciate the fact that faculty is available to answer questions and provide continuous feedback throughout the semester. The assessment methods meet the European Qualifications Framework. The pandemic enforced a Zoom/Teams teaching approach. However, it should be pointed out that several faculty members were recording their lectures before the pandemic and were providing these lecture recordings through a dedicated online platform, which is also used to upload teaching material electronically.

Strengths for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

- 1. Overall there seems to be a strong welfare support for students.*
- 2. There is a new group of university buildings that will soon be delivered that includes good-size modern and well-equipped classrooms. This will complement the existing facilities and laboratories.*
- 3. Office hours work well.*
- 4. Exceptional experimental facilities that provide students the opportunity to participate in research activities and be exposed early on to research.*

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

Not many areas of improvement were detected for this program.

EEC's comment 6:

Practical training at the industry in summer should be included in the degree, as an additional practical experience to be combined with theoretical knowledge.

HEI's response:

Following the EEC's recommendation, the Department decided (8th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, 27/7/2021, **Annex B2**) to add to the undergraduate program two practical training courses (industry placement). These will be offered in the summer semester between the 2nd and 3rd years studies and between the 3rd and 4th years of studies. Each course will have 3 ECTS. These ECTS will not count for the 240 ECTS requirement of the BSc degree, as the practical training courses will be optional. A student may opt to take none, one or two of the courses. The students will be allowed to take each course only once.

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Findings for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

While the vast majority of courses are taught by teaching staff who are permanently employed by the University, there are some key courses which are taught by visiting staff with contracts just to teach that course. These staff normally have PhD degrees in the relevant subject, although some laboratory courses have staff with a masters degree (often current PhD students). The approach ensures staff are qualified to teach their courses.

All new teaching staff must attend an introduction to teaching course which is run centrally for the University. New staff are appointed with consideration of both teaching and research need and ability, and performance is monitored through research evaluations and evaluation by students for all taught courses. The member of staff who is teaching the course and Head of Department have access to the student evaluations and the Head of department is responsible for taking action if teaching is poor. These student evaluations form part of any promotion case.

All permanent staff also conduct research, including with overseas universities, and this ensures there is a strong link between teaching and research in the department. While the final thesis is a capstone design project rather than a research project, students are offered the opportunity to undertake research over the summer which the staff fund through their research budgets or other means.

EEC's comment 7:

There were some concerns expressed by junior staff that the promotion criteria are not very clear. There is good informal advice available to staff seeking promotion, but no formal mentoring scheme available for new staff. Staff were under the impression that although research, teaching and administration are the three components of an academic career at the University of Cyprus, promotion is mainly based on Research. The University has only recently adopted an award for excellent teaching.

HEI's response:

The Departmental Board discussed in detail in the 8th/2021 Departmental Board meeting (27/7/2021, **Annex B2**) the EEC's recommendation of establishing formal mentoring of junior staff. The vast majority of the board members were not in favor of formal mentorship because it is felt that it will give rise to complexities that will work to the detriment of the junior staff and the Department as a whole. Nonetheless, junior academic staff are strongly encouraged to seek counseling and advice on a variety of academic matters from at least two senior members, so that each junior member could synthesize the opinions and come up with informed decisions on his/her own.

We agree with the EEC that teaching and administrative load should definitely be considered when evaluating a faculty member for promotion. Efforts will be made to ensure that this practice is uniformly applied in all faculty promotion procedures of the CEE Department.

Strengths for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

- 1. The number of permanent staff (which has increased in recent years), and the clear passion of the staff for Civil Engineering is a strength of the department. The communication from staff to students, particularly during the COVID pandemic is a clear strength. Students were very positive about the teaching they received from staff and acknowledged that they have developed additional skills that they will be able to use both during their degree and when they work in industry.*

EEC's comment 8:

- 2. While it is important that the undergraduate courses are focused around in-person (face to face) teaching (especially for laboratory based courses) it would be good practice to continue to retain teaching materials online as done through the pandemic.*

HEI's response:

The efforts made by the teaching staff in switching from teaching in the classroom to distance learning during the pandemic have produced electronic material that the faculty members consider an asset. Nearly all teaching staff have a dedicated online Blackboard space for each course, where teaching material can be posted.

- 3. Having current experienced PhD students (who already have masters degrees) teaching some of the laboratory based undergraduate courses provides excellent career development opportunities for the PhD students, and ensures undergraduate students are taught by those who are dealing with the laboratory equipment on a more regular basis than some of the permanent academic staff.*

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

EEC's comment 9:

- 1. While the vast majority of courses are taught by teaching staff who are permanently employed by the University, there are some key areas where there are no permanent staff. Hydrology and some aspects of hydraulics are areas which would benefit from additional staffing as this is a clear need in Cyprus with the water availability problems that it faces. Having non-permanent staff teaching this indicates to students that it is not an important area of study which is not the correct impression.*

HEI's response:

On 15/7/2021, the Department placed a request for the opening of a faculty position at the rank of lecturer or assistant professor with expertise in the field of Hydrology/Water Resources Management (**Annex B1**). The request was recently forwarded from the Rector's Council to the pertinent Personnel and Development Committee and is under examination.

EEC's comment 10:

- 2. Having more of the first year taught by Civil Engineering staff is recommended as this will ensure that students are more focussed on the profession, and can see how certain other subjects (such as mathematics, physics or computer programming) link to Civil Engineering. This will ensure students feel part of the Civil Engineering degree and may have a positive effect on first year retention, but it could require some additional staffing. Many Civil Engineering faculty members will have the knowledge to be able to teach this to first year students, and will be able to build in more relevant examples for students.*

HEI's response:

Our undergraduate program does not include a chemistry course and we are currently relying on what students learned in high school. The Department decided (10th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, 25/8/2021, **Annex B3**) to introduce one chemistry course in the first semester of the undergraduate program. The chemistry course will be taught by Despo Fatta-Kassinou and Argyro Tsipa, who are chemical engineers, as well as special scientist in a 3-year rotation. The course content and structure are can be found in **Annex B4**. The course will have 5 ECTS. To create space in the program for the

introduction of the chemistry course, it was decided (10th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, 25/8/2021, **Annex B3**) to merge the mathematics courses MAS 026 and MAS 027 (multivariate calculus and ordinary differential equation, respectively) in one new course, which will still be offered as a service course by staff of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. We are currently in contact with staff of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics in order to finalize the content of the new (merged) math course. With the introduction of the chemistry course and the reduction of the total number of math courses by one (from 5 to 4), we achieve in having more contact between first year students and CEE faculty members, thus assisting the effort of increasing first year retention. The Departmental Board is still exploring the possibility of some math courses and the physics course to be offered by CEE faculty members.

EEC's comment 11:

- It is recommended that before the start of the new academic year the department hold a meeting/workshop where they consider student feedback and the experience from the COVID disruption, and whether any changes introduced then should be continued. In particular the provision of learning materials online, and the recording of lectures should be considered.*

HEI's response:

The Department's undergraduate and postgraduate programs committees made efforts to arrange a 360° feedback meeting with this year's graduates, as well as current students, during the summer months following the submission of the EEC's evaluation report. However, this was proven to be difficult due to unavailability given that it was the summer break period. The CEE department has decided (10th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, **Annex B3**) to hold a 360° feedback meeting with students and recent graduates at the end of each academic year (end of May).

EEC's comment 12:

- While teaching staff will approach teaching in different ways and it is an important part of the student experience to experience different teaching styles, there should still be some level of consistency such as agreeing to use Blackboard or Teams for provision of learning materials and for student submissions of coursework. A discussion should also be had with incoming students to explain the teaching approach and show the range of civil engineering and how this will be addressed in their programme.*

HEI's response:

Nearly all teaching staff have a dedicated online Blackboard space for each course, where teaching material can be posted. At the beginning of each Fall semester an orientation session is held (under the auspices of the UCY's Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service) for the incoming undergraduate students. The teaching approach, the range of civil engineering and how this will be addressed in the program are presented and explained during this session by either the undergraduate program coordinator or the Department Head.

EEC's comment 13:

- While not teaching staff, there appears to be a shortage of technical staff who are needed to support the work of the teaching staff and ensure that the students are able to meet all the practical requirements of a civil engineering degree. This is not only detrimental to the learning experience of students but is also a potential safety concern. It is recommended that the provision of technical staff be reviewed from both a student learning and safety perspective.*



HEI's response:

The Department acknowledges the serious shortcoming in adequate staffing of the laboratories. Since its establishment, the goal of the Department was to operate with one lab manager and two technicians and has constantly demanded to raise the number of lab technicians from one to two. Following EEC evaluation, the CEE Department requested on 15/7/2021 the hiring of one more technician (**Annex B5**). The minimum qualifications of the technician will be a technology degree (civil or mechanical). Until the move to the new Engineering School buildings, the Department requested the new technician to serve the needs of both laboratory locations, spending 3 days at the laboratories located in the old campus and 2 days in the Strovolos laboratories. Until the hiring of the lab technician, the need will be covered temporarily by hiring of an administrative support special scientist under a 1-year contract. The Vice-Rector for International Affairs, Finance and Administration has affirmed that will support both our requests (for technician and, in the meantime for a special scientist) to the pertinent committees and approval bodies (**Annex B6**). Provided final approval is granted, the administrative support special scientist is expected to begin work by January 2022.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

Findings for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

BSc: Undergraduates admitted ~35 per year. A similar number of students graduate per year. The entrance requirements are clearly regulated by the PanCypriot exam.

EEC's comment 14:

The members of the Department have expressed a concern on the declining minimum mark for entry over the last years, as a result of a declining interest of students towards Civil Engineering. (The entrance mark is state regulated through the entrance exam-system). The Department has taken actions to inform students on the profession of Civil Engineering and its importance to the society. The members of the Department have also suggested as a means to address the dropout rate in the first year, to gradually move towards the direction of the members of the Civil Engineering Department teaching the first year courses.

HEI's response:

The CEE Department (10th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, **Annex B3**) will commence an information campaign as early as November 2021 with faculty member visits to high schools and organize a meeting with high school career counselors of the Nicosia District. Moreover, the Department has already started efforts towards increasing the contact between students and CEE faculty member during the first year of study (please see response to EEC's comment 10).

Regarding student progression those are clearly specified and are known in advance to the students. Each course corresponds to 5 ECTS credits. The students are awarded a Bachelor's degree after 4 years, having completed 240 ECTS credits. This is in agreement with the requirements of the Cyprus professional accreditation body ETEK. There is a mandatory 4th year thesis project which is a design project done in groups. Courses midterm, finals, homeworks and projects, final exam can at most be 60% of the final grade. Students are given the opportunity to work on research projects over the summer. There is no resit of exams courses are retaken typically in a following year. There is a limit on the total ECTS one can take per semester of 38 ECTS credits per semester. Max duration of studies is 6 years (can be extended for reasons that may lead to a student rustivating for a semester). The meeting with the Academic advisor is optional for the students, unless they are performing inadequately where in such cases the Advisor needs to sign a registration form.

Strengths for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

- The Department is ranked typically in the first or second position in preferences of the students following the Pancyriot Exam. This ensures good quality of students.*
- The Pancyriot Exam results in a state-controlled admission process whose details are very well explained to the applying students. It also ensures the quality of the admission process.*
- The number of students admitted results in a good ratio of students per lecturers.*
- The progression rules are very well stated and marks involve a mixture of exams, classwork and midterms.*
- The Degree is in a very good alignment with the accreditation requirements of ETEK and other technical chambers.*
- While the existing facilities are already of good standard. The transfer to new buildings is a further positive.*
- There is a well-defined process of transfer of credits which is known to the students before admission.*

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

EEC's comment 15:

The Department has detected an area of improvement related to admissions: the quality of the students admitted and the reduction of dropout rates in the first year. Their suggestions on how to tackle that are reasonable. It involves lecturers informing students on the importance of the Civil Engineering profession through visits to schools. For the dropout rate the Department has the ambitious, but justified plan, to take over the teaching of courses (maths and physics) in the first year. The committee supports both suggestions.

HEI's response:

Thank you for your comment. Please see response to EEC's comments 10 and 14.

EEC's comment 16:

Perhaps though an additional direction is to set up a system of tutorials for admitted students who seem to struggle. This could be in the form of extra classes and may be offered by teaching assistants. The salaries of such assistants should be covered by the University. This would be in compliance with policies of other Cypriot Universities.

HEI's response:

Supporting tutoring services towards students diagnosed with learning difficulties are administrated centrally by the University (Social Support Office of the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service). There are currently efforts at central level to enhance this institution.

EEC's comment 17:

Additionally the committee believes that the students' meeting with their Academic Advisors should be mandatory.

HEI's response:

Following EEC's recommendation, the Department decided (8th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, 14/7/2021, **Annex B7**) to render the meetings with the academic advisors mandatory for all students, starting this semester (Fall 2021). Each student must meet twice with the academic advisor at the beginning each academic semester (Fall and Spring). As done already for the current semester, each student must arrange a meeting with the advisor preferably two weeks before the first day of classes and no later than the end of the first week of classes.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Findings for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

The Department has a satisfactory infrastructure (classrooms, laboratories, library, etc) and resources (lab consumables, software) to adequately support its teaching mission. Currently, teaching is taking place in two buildings (CTF01 and CTF02) at the Aglantzia Campus. The buildings have several classrooms which are well equipped with modern audiovisual media. The Department maintains 12 labs to support lab courses. The Department has two PC labs for students use with more than 60 computers, while other IT facilities are also available centrally by the university. Several electronic services are available for the students by the Infrastructure Information System. All the buildings provide access to students with disabilities. The university's library is the largest in the country and provides several services to the academic community. A weak point is that offices, classrooms, labs and other facilities are rather scattered in distant locations. However this problem will be solved upon completion of the construction of the Department's new building where all services and labs will be gathered.

Several student support mechanisms are available to enhance students' needs. All these services are listed in the Department's web page. Specific services (e.g. academic support staff, social support office, housing office, student life office, psychological support centre, health and safety department) are available at the university level to provide support to special needs (students with disabilities, health or social and psychological problems, etc). Optional courses are offered centrally by the university on technical writing, ethics and career development. A mobility office centrally operates to provide support to international exchange programs.

Strengths for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

The Department clearly provides several mechanisms to support students' academic and social life during their studies. This is well evidenced by the students' satisfaction regarding supporting services.

The new state of the art library which provides high quality services to both faculty members and students.

The well equipped teaching rooms and labs support the student-centred learning procedure.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Bachelor of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering]

No major weak points have been identified in BSc programme's learning and students support procedures. Some recommendations for possible improvements are the following:

EEC's comment 18:

- *The meetings of students with the Academic Advisor would be preferentially mandatory.*

HEI's response:

Following EEC's recommendation, the Department decided (8th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, 14/7/2021, **Annex B7**) to render the meetings with the academic advisors mandatory for all students, starting this semester (Fall 2021). Each student must meet twice with the academic advisor at the beginning each academic semester (Fall and Spring). As done already for the current semester, each student must arrange a meeting with the advisor preferably two weeks before the first day of classes and no later than the end of the first week of classes.

EEC's comment 19:

- *A more detailed plan for students' support and briefing regarding mobility opportunities can be implemented by the Department to enhance the centrally operated mobility office.*



HEI's response:

The Department, among its several administrative committees, has already one faculty member serving as a mobility liaison for all mobility programs (Erasmus+, Socrates, YUFE, interinstitutional agreements). One of the roles of the mobility liaison is to provide counselling for relevant matters to the Department's students, independently of the central office.



6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

A number of recommendations are suggested for consideration to ensure the future evolution of all programmes. These recommendations are summarized as follows:

EEC's comment 20:

1. Potentially new hiring of professors in core areas such as, water resources and management, energy efficiency of buildings, transportation systems with emphasis on road safety could be an asset to offer more opportunities particularly at the graduate and postgraduate level.

HEI's response:

On 15/7/2021, the Department placed a request for the opening of a faculty position at the rank of lecturer or assistant professor with expertise in the field of Hydrology/Water Resources Management (**Annex B1**). The request was recently forwarded from the Rector's Council to the pertinent Personnel and Development Committee and is under examination. The Department has set as a second priority the opening of a faculty position in the field of energy efficiency of buildings.

A second faculty position in the field of transportation engineering (i.e. in addition to the existing one) is not part of the strategic plan of the Department. However, there is currently an effort at Engineering School level to open a faculty position in the related, more advanced field of "smart cities".

EEC's comment 21:

2. Some re-balancing in course allocation may be necessary. It appears that some junior faculty teach a number of core (large-audience) undergraduate courses. This seems to be compromising time from research, which is considered one of the pillars for tenure and promotion

HEI's response:

The normal course load is 4 courses per year per faculty member. Most faculty members teach two or more elective (undergraduate and postgraduate) courses and two or less core courses with inevitably large audience. This will be set to be the norm for all faculty without exceptions, in order to not have uneven distribution of course load among faculty.

EEC's comment 22:

4. A formal junior faculty mentoring system should be established to provide guidance in tenure/promotion requirements early on in the process.

HEI's response:

The Departmental Board discussed in detail in the 8th/2021 Departmental Board meeting (27/7/2021, **Annex B2**) the EEC's recommendation of establishing formal mentoring of junior staff. The vast majority of the board members were not in favor of formal mentorship because it is felt that it will give rise to complexities that will work to the detriment of the junior staff and the Department as a whole. Nonetheless, junior academic staff are strongly encouraged to seek counseling and advice on a variety of academic matters, including those pertaining to promotion, from at least two senior members, so that each junior member could synthesize the opinions and come up with informed decisions on his/her own.

We agree with the EEC that teaching and administrative load should definitely be considered when evaluating a faculty member for promotion. Efforts will be made to ensure that this practice is uniformly applied in all faculty promotion procedures of the CEE Department.

EEC's comment 23:

7. Having more of the first year taught by Civil Engineering staff is recommended as this will ensure that students are more focussed on the profession, and can effectively comprehend how other core subjects (e.g., mathematics, physics or computer programming) link to Civil Engineering. This will ensure that students are exposed early on in their Civil Engineering degree, anticipating to have a positive effect on their first year retention; this could require some additional staffing. Many Civil Engineering faculty members will have the required knowledge to be able to teach the above subjects to first year students, and will be able to build in more relevant examples for students.

HEI's response:

The Department decided (10th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, 25/8/2021, **Annex B3**) to introduce one chemistry course in the first semester of the undergraduate program. The chemistry course will be taught by Despo Fatta-Kassinou and Argyro Tsipa, who are chemical engineers, as well as special scientist in a 3-year rotation. The course content and structure can be found in **Annex B4**. The course will have 5 ECTS. To create space in the program for the introduction of the chemistry course, it was decided (10th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, 25/8/2021, **Annex B3**) to merge the mathematics courses MAS 026 and MAS 027 (multivariate calculus and ordinary differential equation, respectively) in one new course, which will still be offered as a service course by staff of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. With the introduction of the chemistry course and the reduction of the total number of math courses by one (from 5 to 4), we achieve in having more contact between first year students and CEE faculty members, thus assisting the effort of increasing first year retention. The Departmental Board is still exploring the possibility of some math courses and the physics course to be offered by CEE faculty members.

EEC's comment 24:

8. It is recommended that before the start of the new academic year the department holds a meeting/workshop where they consider student feedback and the experience from the COVID disruption, and whether any changes introduced then should be continued. In particular the provision of learning materials online, and the recording of lectures should be considered. While teaching staff will approach teaching in different ways and it is an important part of the student experience to experience different teaching styles, there should still be some level of consistency such as agreeing to use Blackboard or Teams for provision of learning materials and for student submissions of coursework.

HEI's response:

The Department's undergraduate and postgraduate programs committees made efforts to arrange a 360° feedback meeting with this year's graduates, as well as current students, during the summer months following the submission of the EEC's evaluation report. However, this was proven to be difficult due to unavailability given that it was the summer break period. The CEE department has decided (10th/2021 Departmental Board meeting, **Annex B3**) to hold a 360° feedback meeting with students and recent graduates at the end of each academic year (end of May). Nearly all teaching staff have a dedicated online Blackboard space for each course, where teaching material can be posted and homework submitted.

EEC's comment 25:

9. While not teaching staff, there appears to be a shortage of technical staff who may be needed to support the work of the teaching staff and ensure that the students are able to meet all the practical requirements of a civil engineering degree. However, this should be carefully examined and coordinated with the university particularly when the new experimental facilities become available.

HEI's response:

The Department acknowledges the serious shortcoming in adequate staffing of the laboratories. Since its establishment, the goal of the Department was to operate with one lab manager and two technicians and has constantly demanded to raise the number of lab technicians from one to two. Following EEC evaluation, the CEE Department requested on 15/7/2021 the hiring of one more technician (**Annex B5**). The minimum qualifications of the technician will be a technology degree (civil or mechanical). Until the move to the new Engineering School buildings, the Department requested the new technician to serve the needs of both laboratory locations, spending 3 days at the laboratories located in the old campus and 2 days in the Strovolos laboratories. Until the hiring of the lab technician, the need will be covered temporarily by hiring of an administrative support special scientist under a 1-year contract. The Vice-Rector for International Affairs, Finance and Administration has affirmed that will support both our requests (for technician and, in the meantime for a special scientist) to the pertinent committees and approval bodies (**Annex B6**). Provided final approval is granted, the administrative support special scientist is expected to begin work by January 2022.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Dimitrios Loukidis	Associate Professor, Head of Civil & Environmental Engineering Department	
Dimos Charmpis	Associate Professor, Undergraduate Program Coordinator	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: 16 September 2021

