

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 04/02/2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)
Bachelor in Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies (4 years/242 ECTS, BA Conventional)
In Greek:
Προπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα στις Νεοελληνικές και Βυζαντινές Σπουδές
In English:
Undergraduate Programme in Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** Choose Status
- **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 2nd 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
Students expressed the wish for updating and renewing some of the courses and introducing more interdisciplinary themes (e.g. literature and film) or courses that concern more contemporary literary and theoretical trends. Even though the EEC finds the study programme to be very rich and diverse, it supports this suggestion and advises the department to take it into account.	The Department agrees with the EEC that its Program is very rich and diverse. However, it does make every effort to continuously update its course offerings. It perceives the EEC's and the student's suggestion as a positive one and it will continue to look for ways to enrich its current curriculum. The recommendation has already been forwarded to all faculty members. Additionally, in the next departmental meeting (26/2) the Chair of the Department will ask colleagues to take it into account as they are preparing to submit their courses for the next academic year.	Choose level of compliance:
The students noted that some classical Greek language courses in the Classics Department are not always open to them at the time that they are needed in their progression towards graduation. We hope that the Classics Department will do more to accommodate these students. Students must enjoy priority access to mandatory courses in the semester in which they feature in the degree programme table across departmental divisions, to ensure smooth academic progress, even workload distribution and timely completion of the degree requirements.	The Department will communicate this issue to the Classics Department. Our experience so far has been that, despite the difficulties, the Classics Department eventually accommodates most students and particularly seniors. Yet, we will coordinate with the Classics Department and investigate how we can help to alleviate the situation. We believe that all three Departments in the Faculty of Letters should coordinate their efforts to ensure the students' smooth academic progress. Before the end of the Spring semester (2025) the Chair of the Department will communicate with the Chair of Classics to discuss the issue. He will also raise the issue with the Dean of the Faculty of Letters so that the three departments coordinate their actions.	Choose level of compliance:



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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The relatively low level of some of the incoming students, as reflected, for example, in poor writing skills, is a challenge, which is noted by faculty members. The need for additional tutoring for these students is met by a non-compulsory course, currently taught by a PhD student. The EEC fully supports this measure. Given that the students' reduced language and writing skills are a general phenomenon, the EEC recommends making this course compulsory but also ensuring that it becomes more attractive to students, by enriching it with components of transferable and digital skills, such as training in creating web content (e.g., writing a blog text), creating a podcast, etc.	The Department extensively discussed this issue during its latest Departmental meeting (29/1). It has decided to appoint a colleague (Professor Hinterberger) to collect all opinions in the Department concerning the matter and present possible solutions in a forthcoming meeting. Some of the ideas discussed include associating the language skills course with the existing "Academic Writing" course or one of the other Mandatory courses. In this way, students would be obliged to take it. Depending on the Department's decision, changes will be implemented in the Fall Semester of 2025.	Choose level of compliance:
Cap in registration / inadequate spots in existing courses: Students complained about the lack of spaces in mandatory courses at the appropriate moment in their degree programme table (DPT), due to the cap in registrations per course. This concerns: a) courses they are required to take in other departments, especially Classics. In these courses there are often not enough spots for students of this BA, as students from the other departments get priority in registration. The EEC recommends exploring the option of offering courses from Classics especially for Byzantine and Modern Greek studies BA students, adjusted to their needs.	As discussed above, the problem of inadequate spots will be communicated to the Chair of Classics, and it will be discussed at the Faculty of Letters so that all three departments can coordinate their efforts. We agree with the EEC's recommendation to request courses offered exclusively for our students. One complication might be the relatively low number of students that might be taking such courses. If, however, these courses are offered for History students as well, the Classics Department might be able to accommodate a joint request. In any case, the Department understands that the final decision about this matter rests with the Department of Classics, but it will make every effort to	Choose level of compliance:

b) courses offered within the department. More courses would need to be offered to cover students' needs, but the inability to do so has to do with the department becoming increasingly understaffed. Addressing this problem would require enhancing the department with new staff members through new hires: this is necessary to compensate for staff members who retired recently or will retire very soon. In light of impending retirements of 1/3 of the department staff, this problem needs to be alleviated before it takes on larger dimensions. Involving more PhD students in teaching courses could also be a (temporary) solution.	communicate the students' concerns. As stated above, before the end of the Spring semester (2025) the Chair of the Department will communicate with the Chair of Classics to discuss the issue. He will also raise the issue with the Dean of the Faculty of Letters so that the three departments coordinate their actions. The Department agrees with the EEC that the problem of its understaffing needs to be addressed urgently. As already stated, it will submit a request for at least one new hire to the administration before the end of the semester. The Chair of the Department has also discussed the issue with the Dean of the Faculty of Letters. The Department notes once again that it is in full agreement with the EEC. The only action it can take, however, is to inform the University administration and hope that at least one new position is allocated to it. It has also decided to employ more graduate students as teaching assistants, when possible, as the EEC suggests. For the current semester (Spring 25), three graduate (PhD) students are employed. The Department plans to employ the same number of students or more in the forthcoming semester.	
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3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
We recommend measures to alleviate the logistical burdens that currently fall upon the teaching staff, such as: organizing the semester teaching programmes in the currently dispersed venues. Logistical support for drafting and implementing grants and especially grant budgets	The Department will forward these recommendations to the appropriate University offices before the end of the semester. The University has offered its assistance in identifying grant opportunities, but it will work closely with the Research and Innovation support services to see in what other ways it can support researchers. The logistical burdens that relate to the organization of the teaching programmes are more difficult to alleviate. Our secretaries work hard in collaboration with the scheduling office and with the faculty coordinator of the Programme to ensure that there are no conflicts between the courses offered and that rooms are secured for these courses. The schedule of classes often needs to be adjusted several times. These duties are increasingly taken over by the faculty and they, indeed, constitute a tremendous burden. As stated, the Department will communicate the problem to the Administration before the end of the spring semester. The Department notes once again that it is in full agreement with the EEC. The only action it can take, however, is to inform the University administration.	Choose level of compliance:
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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
The department staff are already active in promoting the BA program, e.g. through visits to high schools in the country. To boost the number of admissions both in the BA and MA, the EEC recommends: a) using additional methods of promotion, e.g. by enriching the website (e.g. with a video “pitching” the programme to prospective students; a dynamic section with student and alumni testimonials) and offering online information sessions in which the programme is presented to prospective students (both in the BA and MA) who cannot physically attend on-site information sessions. b) mobilising the university’s marketing department to help more actively with student recruitment and make the professional resources (e.g. professional photographers and videographers) needed for the above promotion tactics available.	The Department’s website has been significantly renewed and updated in the past couple of years. Apart from our secretaries, we have trained one of our doctorate students to assist in the process. We agree with the EEC’s suggestion, and we will proceed to add the following: A) One or more promotional videos pitching the program to progressive students. B) A testimonials section. C) The possibility of arranging online information sessions to assist prospective students. To do these, the Department will need plenty of assistance from the University technical services (for the recording of the videos). As the EEC suggests, we will contact the marketing department to seek professional resources (photographers and videographers). If they are made available to us and if the University will take on the burdensome task of producing and editing these videos, we would be happy to work with them. Provided the Department gets the support it needs, we expect that these will be implemented by the end of 2025.	Choose level of compliance:
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5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

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We recommend that the University prioritise concentration of teaching and (faculty and administration) office facilities of the Department in one adequately equipped location and make provisions for a faculty-meeting room. We also recommend further negotiations of the University with the transportation authorities of the municipality for better and more frequent bus services from the city to the campus and vice versa.	We are in full agreement with the EEC on both points: a) An adequate location needs to be secured for the department as soon as possible. The Department has repeatedly informed the administration of this problem. It has also repeatedly informed the appropriate university committees of this unacceptable infrastructural problem and its many health hazards. The Department agrees that the University needs to take urgent action to resolve the problem, and it will inform the administration once again, before the end of the semester. The Department notes once again that it is in full agreement with the EEC. The only action it can take, however, is to inform the University administration and hope for a speedy resolution of this issue. b) The Department has communicated with the university's transportation office and has been informed that, since January 27, additional bus-routes are offered to students by both the municipality and the transportation office. The transportation office has one bus at its disposal, but it coordinates with students' representatives to use it when most needed. The director of transportation	Choose level of compliance:

	services has expressed an emphatic willingness to help students, and his office recently met with student representatives to address their concerns.	
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6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

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7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Raise the enrollment cap of the mandatory courses that the students need in order to graduate on time	The Department always makes sure to offer enough spots to its students in the mandatory courses. The problem usually arises with courses outside the Department as the EEC states above. We will certainly coordinate with the Classics Department and the Faculty of Letters to ensure that students always secure a spot in the mandatory courses. As stated above, before the end of the Spring semester (2025) the Chair of the Department will communicate with the Chair of Classics to discuss the issue. He will also raise the issue with the Dean of the Faculty of Letters so that the three departments coordinate their actions.	Choose level of compliance:
Find permanent solution to the problem of the dispersed classroom and office locations. This challenge is directly related to the shortage of staff in the department and can be resolved through new hires.	The Department will take the following actions before the end of the semester: a) Inform the administration of the EEC's findings and request its urgent move to a suitable location b) Submit a request for at least one new faculty position The Department notes once again that it is in full agreement with the EEC. The only action it can take, however, is to inform the University administration.	Choose level of compliance:
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D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Marinos Pourgouris	Assistant Professor, Chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies	
Marilena Karyolaimou	Professor, Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies (Chair during the evaluation process)	
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