

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date.

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**

Name

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό στις Επιστήμες της Αγωγής

In English:

PhD in Pedagogical Sciences

- **Language(s) of instruction: Greek**

- **Programme's status: Currently Operating**

- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Παιδαγωγική της Φυσικής Αγωγής, Πολυπολιτισμικότητα, Μετανάστευση και Αποαποικιακή Εκπαίδευση, Νηπιοσχολική Αγωγή, Θεωρία και Φιλοσοφία της Εκπαίδευσης, Θρησκευτική Παιδεία, Κοινωνιολογία της Εκπαίδευσης

In English: Sports Pedagogy, Multiculturalism, Migration and Decolonial Education, Early Childhood Education, Theory and Philosophy of Education, Religious Education, Sociology of Education



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

The main purpose and objectives of the Ph.D. programme should be related to the creation and advancement of new knowledge (see Salzburg, 2015 report1). The overall purpose of the PhD could therefore be strengthened and explicitly related to increasing the depth and breadth of knowledge of each PhD discipline. Further, an objective should be related to developing student expertise in research methodology which is applicable to both a specific project and a wider context.

- In doctoral studies, programmes knowledge should be “at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study”, skills should be “the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice” (see Nerad et al., 20222).
 - In doctoral studies the student should be provided with opportunities to develop a range of skills to a very advanced level. These skills relate both to the research process itself and to broader professional training and development. Examples of educational objectives for all graduates of doctoral programmes could be: research skills and awareness; ethics and social understanding; communication skills; personal effectiveness/development; team-working and leadership; career management; and entrepreneurship and innovation (see Irish National Framework for Doctoral Education3).
 - In relation to intended outcomes, we suggest being consistent with the wording (e.g., students will be able to...). Outcomes should be related to the above attributes in general and tailored to the specifics of each programme.
 - Another area that could be strengthened is formalising mechanisms for capturing and acting on ‘student voice’. The committee appreciates the embedded approach to evaluating subjects. However, there is scope to gather students’ input into the design and delivery of programmes (e.g., ask for content related feedback, and use it to refine the content of different modules, including options for assessment). We would strongly suggest using student voice and feedback when planning in-service training for the teaching staff.
 - When conducting a self-evaluation for QYQAA accreditation, it would be useful for the team to provide text-based justifications for their answers as a stimulus for their reflection.
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- The EEC has rated 1.1 as partially compliant as there should be formal mechanisms for ongoing evaluation of the programme in between the student evaluation of courses and the CYQAA accreditation of programmes.
 - The EEC has rated 1.2 as partially compliant for the reasons outlined in the preceding areas of improvement. In particular, each programme’s purpose and objectives should explicitly align with expectations of PhD level study (see Salzburg, 2015).

Actions Taken by the Institution

In relation to intended outcomes we have worked together for tuning formulations of intended outcomes towards attaining internal programme cohesion and adapting the programme to the guidelines of Salzburg (2015).

- After successful completion of the programme, it is expected that students of the Area **Sociology of Education will be able to** :
 - Acquire updated knowledge of the basic theoretical perspectives in Sociology and obtain awareness of the ways that these perspectives have influenced Sociology of Education.
 - Gain a deep ethical and social understanding, within the epistemic framework of Sociological thinking, and analyze current educational issues through a sociological lens.
 - Develop research skills in reviewing bibliography through a critical lens while connecting it with specific and innovative research questions.
 - Elaborate a comprehensive research project for any related educational issue which will connect Sociological theory with research questions individually and in team work.
 - Become familiar with the basic tenets of quantitative and qualitative research and acquire communication skills, experience and ease in applying these methods to collecting and analyzing data.
 - Connect data to theoretical concepts and develop their critical thinking and ability to deconstruct phenomena of inequality in society in order to contribute to ameliorating inequalities.

- After successful completion of the programme, it is expected that students of the Area **Theory and Philosophy of Education will be able to**:
 - Obtain new knowledge, get accustomed with the state-of-the-art developments in the field and sharpen their communication skills in order to share their ideas with their local and international colleagues effectively.

 - Develop their research skills, investigate the main body of scholarship in philosophy and theory of education and discuss in significant critical depth contemporary educational orthodoxies and consolidated practices.

 - Combine ethics and social understanding with adequate specialization in the philosophical and theoretical-educational topics of their choice, having also the required background and versatility for revisiting educational developments of their times and satisfying expectations of innovation.

- Familiarize themselves through individual as well as team-based work with a broad spectrum of rival theories that aspire to explain, or to critique, current tendencies in education. They will also be exposed, through participation in various international academic events, to scholarly experiences that heighten their critical awareness of how such rival theories tackle major educational issues today.
 - Interrogate the ideologies, notions and insights that secure the hegemonic concordance of higher education. They will also be able to complicate received and facile views on educational issues of a wide interest and of topical significance both locally and internationally.
 - Intervene in the international scientific dialogue of the related fields (philosophy, educational theory) and contribute to the production of internationally valued academic research on the relevant topics.
- After successful completion of the programme, it is expected that students of the Area **Religious Education**, will be able to:
- Familiarize themselves with the relevant literature, prioritize research on it and detect new considerations of important issues in it.
 - Develop critical literacy skills and communication skills in order to develop awareness of tensions and debates over religious matters.
 - Develop research skills to examine state-of-the-art topics and demonstrate their importance for Education.
 - Air their scientific findings in international academic fora and explore through team working possible further advancements in related international research.
 - Turn new research-obtained knowledge into usable teaching material that will be communicated variously at different levels of education.
- After successful completion of the programme, it is expected that students of the Area **Sports Pedagogy**, will be able to:
- acquire the basic knowledge of the epistemological theories of PE and develop social understanding skills.
 - develop skills for reviewing and critically analyzing the literature related to specific research questions in the field of PE.

- be acquainted with qualitative and quantitative research methods, ensure awareness of local and international research priorities and acquire experience in applying these methods to the collection and analysis of data in the field of PE.
 - analyze and interpret the results of current studies in PE individually and in teams, while also considering the relevant ethics.
 - be able to propose future research directions in the field of PE.
 - Develop communication skills in order to exchange their research findings and benefit from one another's immersion in new scholarly developments.
- After successful completion of the programme, it is expected that students of the Area **Multiculturalism, Migration and Decolonial Education**, will be able to:
- acquire state of the art knowledge frames on the field and recognize, address and rethink epistemological, political and ethical tensions and debates (e.g., between ethics of recognition and ethics of redistribution, politics of difference and politics of identity, critiquing the postcolonial archive and decolonizing epistemologies and research methodologies).
 - develop advanced and diverse research methodology expertise in order to conduct research in settings of multiculturalism, migration and coloniality in urban, national and global contexts.
 - develop skills in reading, writing and communicating theoretical, research and policy development frames as well as communicating new questions and proposals relevant to the field.
 - understand and respond to the ethics of hospitality and ethics of decoloniality.
 - intervene as both experts and public intellectuals in debates, discussions, curriculum development, teacher training and institutional transformation related to the field.
 - develop group work and leadership skills and be able to develop and implement transformative research projects and policy action plans in various academic, organizational and entrepreneurial settings.
- After successful completion of the programme, it is expected that students of the Area **Early Childhood Education**, will be able to:
- get acquainted with the basic literature on early years epistemology, early years pedagogies, young children's learning and development, and approaches to the creation and implementation of educational programmes for young children.

- develop research and other skills for reviewing and critically analyzing individually and through team work the literature related to specific research questions that refer to early childhood education.
 - get accustomed with a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods, and acquire experience in applying these methods to the collection and analysis of data and in promoting the study of basic and applied questions in early years education.
 - make the connection between research and praxis, obtain awareness of their challenges and tensions and formulate the necessary questions to be investigated with the appropriate methodology to respond to important issues in the field in full appreciation of related ethics and social understanding.
 - utilize available research evidence and develop detailed suggestions for early years educational policy changes and innovation, while taking into consideration existing needs and constraints of the educational system with the goal to respond to the needs of children and qualitatively enhance their experiences, learning and development.
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- Beyond student course evaluation, Student Voice is taken into consideration with regards to flexing the structure and content of the programme in response to student needs, interests, and research paradigm to the degree this is allowed by the ECTS completion requirements and CYQAA regulations.
 - Interim reporting on programme progress is conducted at a University level. Course syllabi and programme new additions are presented and analyzed with regards to implementing recommendations provided on a five-year basis by CYQAA.

• Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC

Students expressed a desire for recorded lectures and more intensive collaboration between peers as a means of catching up and broaden the learning possibilities. The Graduate School supporting blended learning could be strengthened in developing the next steps.

The EEC was unclear whether students were paid when assisting activities and labs on an ad hoc basis. It would be important to ensure that students are not overloaded

Please note partial compliance relates to:

- More detail needed on progression.
- More explicit guidelines re dissertation.
- Options for PhD submissions could be broadened, (e.g., to include PhD by publications)

Actions Taken by the Institution

The University law and regulations do not allow for blended learning, unless the program is accredited as a long-distance program.

We are working on proposing new long-distance programs which will give us the opportunity for blended learning.

We can discuss the option of recording our lectures with the Graduate School without having to make our courses long distance for the time being.

All students who officially offer their services for research, teaching or other purposes are paid by the department. They are either paid weekly, depending on their contract, or they receive a stipend at the end of their work. These funds are offered by the department for graduate students depending on their availability and capabilities.

- We can discuss with the Graduate School the option of dissertation by article publication.
- The PhD programmes will include in their regulations two specific points about student involvement, for more awareness of the different stages of their progression.
 - Student PhD proposal presentations will be conducted as programme open events, and programme staff and students will be encouraged to attend. The purpose of such reframing of Proposal Presentation is to enable doctoral student community become better acquainted with stages and thresholds of the researching and writing at the doctoral level.
 - A yearly reading and writing retreat will be introduced in the Program, aiming at developing an enlarged learning community. Participating students and program coordinators can meet once a year in order to share writing samples, give and receive feedback.
 - We follow the broad guidelines by the Graduate School. However, the multidisciplinary and epistemic plurality of the programme precludes further formulaic regulation of the structure of the dissertation.

2. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC

- We understand the quality teaching award focuses on the individual and suggest there is scope to recognise the quality of teams (if applicable).
- The courses do not appear to utilise Visiting Professors. Attention should be given to increasing the contribution of Visiting Professors to the programmes. The engagement of international collaborators could be especially beneficial to post-graduates – though we acknowledge that the language of instruction is Greek, and this in itself will limit the scope of international collaborations.
- Peer observation of teaching can enhance the teaching strategies of both the observed and the observer. This may be a developmental opportunity that the team wish to take advantage of (see footnote for an example4).

Actions Taken by the Institution

- Since 2017, the Educational Philosophy and Theory doctoral programme has been offering to its PhD students the opportunity to co-operate and exchange ideas with educational philosophy doctoral students (Humanities Studies in Pedagogy [HumStud]) from the University of Oslo (Dept of Education). This academic event takes place annually and involves: a two-day seminar where PhD students and professors of both institutions (Uni of Oslo and of Cyprus) present and discuss short papers; and an Oslo funded visit to Cyprus of the students and colleagues of the aforementioned research group from Oslo. This writing retreat/training stay provides the opportunity of constant exchange of ideas between the two groups (Oslo and Cyprus) for a whole week. In addition, when funding was available, there were also lectures delivered by a visiting scholar from another University. When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, the event was confined to webinars on a biannual basis. This doesn't change the fact that it is not always feasible to formalize and constantly pursue the practice of international exchange.
- Our Visiting Scholars budget is limited and is distributed centrally. As much as we would all like to have more Visiting Scholars, it is not always our decision to make and it rests on the functioning needs of the programme instead of its vision for growth.
- At the University we have the Centre for Teaching and Learning which aims to support teaching and learning, so that these may correspond to modern needs and internationally compatible and competitive quality criteria. It offers workshops and seminars for newly appointed and other staff, as well as students. Among these, and in order to ensure quality assurance in teaching, a peer observation policy has been developed. This policy was approved by the Senate (16/2019/ΣΥΓΚΛΗΤΟΣ) and is to be applied on a voluntary basis.

<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/ctl/peer-observation/?lang=en>

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC

- Specify ECTS requirements in section 10.1.3 in the Post Graduate Studies Rules.
- Institute formal processes for checking on student progression while they are undertaking the thesis component of their studies. We appreciate that the small student cohort and the close relationships between students and supervisors appears to have been successful in ensuring progress, however having structured reporting points on an annual basis can be helpful to both students and supervisors.

Actions Taken by the Institution

- All the PhD co-ordinators will formalize a meeting every semester with each student to share information on the delays that have been observed for each one, whether at the proposal stage or the writing stage. We shall make sure that we provide more feedback for the stages that are more troublesome. For example, support them in planning their next steps, communicate with schools or other sources of data collection. All this is already being done through our regular meetings with our students, but it will be formalized as aforementioned.
- Concerning the suggestion to institute formal processes, such as reports, for checking on student progression we inform you about the following practices: We submit a report after the successful completion of the comprehensive exam; and we also submit a report after the Proposal thesis defense.
- We will make the following amendment in terms of the ECTS requirements referring to 10.1.3 in the Post Graduate Studies Rules
 - 10.3.1 Successful completion of at least 60 ECTS in postgraduate courses. If the student holds a Master degree or equivalent, he/she is wholly or partially exempt from this requirement.

<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/graduateschool/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2023/02/kanones-dimosiefsimi-morfi-14.02.23-english-1.pdf>



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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



4. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC

There is considerable variation in the length of readings lists for each subject. Consider reducing the reading list by providing a selection of essential readings and complementary. We would suggest that students are encouraged to search and create reading list based on their needs and research topic of interest.

- Consider flexible or hybrid modes of teaching and learning to embrace current higher education trends in the European Higher Education.
- Promote students' mobility within and across higher education systems.

Consider students with different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, and how they can achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Actions Taken by the Institution

1. Evidently, each discipline and each instructor work with different readings and can provide students with essential readings for each week and every theme tackled. The literature provided for the course in general can be considered as complementary. Nevertheless, we will ask all of the instructors to ensure they make this differentiation clearer in their syllabi.
2. Student mobility across higher institutions is something we promote; nevertheless, due to language barriers this is hard for our students.
3. We have a specific Social Support Office, at the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service, which is responsible for the assessment of the needs and the provision of the support for all students to ensure that they achieve the intended learning outcomes. Please check the following website

<https://ucyweb.ucy.ac.cy/fmweb/en/organizational-structure/welfare-sector-2/social-support-office>

Also, our Department has an academic from the programme of Inclusive Education who acts as a liaison between the students, the Social Support Office and each instructor, supporting every student to receive all they need to be able to perform to their fullest and achieve the intended learning outcomes (e.g. some students are given the opportunity to audiotape every lecture, they are provided with extra time during the /final exam or other options of doing the final exam).



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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION





5. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

NOT AVAILABLE



7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

NOT AVAILABLE

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC

The EEC would like to thank the staff of the university for their informative and open discussion throughout the day. The EEC observed a strong staff team, actively engaged in research in their areas of expertise, strongly connected to their professions. The EEC heard extremely positive feedback from students about the quality of the postgraduate programmes under offer. One student referred to the programme making her a 'better person' this attests to both the positive impact of the student's personal journeys as well as their research journeys.

Additionally:

- The programme appears to be well resourced and we are pleased to see the library as an obvious hub of student activity. We do note however, that academic and administrative staff have been temporarily displaced in the move from one campus to another. Staff did speak with some enthusiasm about the creation of new learning facilities on the new campus.
- Our main recommendations for improvement are intertwined and relate to taking a holistic approach to programme evaluation and review.
- Firstly, we recommend the teaching team work together to revise the programmes purposes and objectives to more explicitly align with standards pertaining to PhD study. Following we suggest a more consistent approach to the expression of programme objectives (without detracting from their uniqueness).
- Following, we suggest that there is scope to have an explicit programme evaluation process that sits in between the course evaluations undertaken by students, and the CYQAA evaluation. A mapping process for example, could occur both within and across programmes. Within programmes such mapping could, for example, ensure the avoidance of duplication (content and assessment). Across programmes, such mapping could ensure consistency of expectations for students with regard to level of study and performance.
- Relatedly, we suggest that it would be useful for staff to have a moderation process whereby some assessments were second marked by a staff member external to the course teacher, to generate discussion about parity and fairness of marking within and across courses. This need not be for every subject nevertheless have some regularity.
- May want to consider the use of supervisory teams, rather than 1:1 supervision. Supervisory relationships may engender collaborative writing, training for upcoming supervisors, encouragement of mixed methods. This may also be a way of fostering national and international collaborations (NB prog of study is in Greek).
- We suggest that attention is given to the creation of a PGR community – this might involve both the Graduate School and the Faculty
- We conclude with a positive comment related to the opportunities that are provided to students to engage with their professions and grow as researchers through their attendance at conferences, networks, act as teaching assistants and so forth. This creates and dynamic environment for student learning

Please refer to individual points as answered above, as these reflect our actions to the remarks made by the committee.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Marianna Papastefanou	Professor in Philosophy of Education	
Stavros Photiou	Professor in Religious Education	
Elia Iliada	Associate Professor in Mathematics Pedagogy in Early Childhood	
Miranda Christou	Associate Professor in Sociology of Education	
Niki Tsaggaridou	Professor in Physical Education	
Zelia Gregoriou	Associate professor of Theory of Education	
Eleni Loizou	Professor in Early Childhood Education	

Date: 14.3.23

