



Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: Date.

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek: Μεσογειακή Αρχαιολογία: Από την
Προϊστορία έως την Βυζαντινή περίοδο

Programme Name

In English:

Mediterranean Archaeology: From Prehistory to the
Byzantine era

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek/English
- **Programme's status:** 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 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) 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 deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *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).*
- *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, 1.8, 1.9)

Findings for MA

Information on the programme is available only in Greek so it cannot be communicated to a wider pool of prospective students. The study programme is suspended; the website does not mention this fact. An English version of the programme is missing from the website (the same holds true for other Master's programmes offered by the Department not presently under review). The Department accepts that this is appropriate. In view of the planned reorganisation of the MA Programme in 'Mediterranean Archaeology', these issues will all be effectively and accordingly addressed and resolved within their new framework.

Findings for PhD

The study programme has a formal status and corresponds to the EQF. The Department website does not provide any obvious information on the departmental PhD programmes other than in a Word document hidden at the bottom of the Greek (only) version of the Master's programme in Mediterranean Archaeology. In that document, a reader must scroll down to page 11 to find any information on the PhD programme.

A new webpage will be constructed and implemented in association with the reformation of the MA Programme. The Department notes the advice of the EEC to keep the PhD Level separate from the MA in the webpage.

Strengths

Strengths for MA

The programme is suspended due to lack of students.

The Department notes that the actual problem is not the *total* lack of students, but the lack of more than five students per course, as required by the strict regulations of the University of Cyprus, which have been discussed with the EEC, and which the EEC also finds unacceptable and unrewarding.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA

The study programme needs to be thoroughly revised in order to make it attractive for students again. The programme should not be simply a duplication and continuation of the Archaeology major of the BA but it needs to re-invent itself with a more specific and targeted profile. To achieve this the EEC makes the following recommendations:

A. Teaching in English language would make it more easily accessible whilst a clear specialization in eastern Mediterranean and Cypriot archaeology will sharpen its focus. The Department should employ its excellent and world-renowned teaching and research expertise in Cypriot archaeology and make this the 'brand' of the programme.

B. The number of courses needs to be increased in meaningful ways so that students can achieve a specialization during their Master's. To this end the vacant positions (due to a hiring freeze) urgently need to be filled and the class quorum for PG courses should be reduced – the EEC realises that responsibility with this does not lie with the Department – in line with international practice, from the current five to a at least three (for comparative purposes, the University of Münster applies a minimum of 2, the University of Edinburgh a minimum of 1). As a

matter of fact, the University would be well advised to take into account that class sizes at leading universities in the Humanities tend to be small.

C. The UCY scholarship programme needs to be expanded to make the programme more attractive.

D. Last but not least, the website needs to be updated and translated into other languages to provide students with relevant information.

The Department fully agrees with the comment of the EEC that:

The archaeologists of the Department express their satisfaction that the EEC has fully realized the problems of this Programme but also the capacities of the teaching staff to implement solutions and handle the challenges. As discussed during the meeting of the EEC with the Department, the archaeologists have already considered as a solution to build up a Master's Programme in Mediterranean Archaeology in English, and more importantly, to focus in Cypriot Archaeology, within the framework of Mediterranean Archaeology. The University of Cyprus has the unique opportunity to become an international centre of teaching the archaeology of the island and of the Eastern Mediterranean in general at a postgraduate level, and has been discussing this issue for some time now. The advises of the EEC, i.e. that this will have to be in English, that the Department should take advantage of its existing teaching and research expertise, that new scholarships will make such a programme more attractive, that vacant positions should be covered, and that the number of students for each course should drop from five to three, are most welcome in that respects and fully express the wishes and efforts of the Department.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD

The website needs to be updated to provide students with relevant information. The English-language sections need to be created.

Students should be better prepared for the job market and for their careers as junior researchers. An obligatory course in research ethics can be useful for that.

The webpage has indeed to be updated. As to the obligatory course in research ethics, this is something we always discuss with our students, each time the opportunity arises, but as regards as an obligatory course it is something that we will consider and thin about.

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

Findings

Findings for MA

The programme is suspended. Since only a few courses were offered, the flexibility of student learning was limited.

The Department notes that the problem was not the limited number of courses offered in this programme, but that the number of students interested in entering this programme each year was smaller than five; according to the regulations of the university of Cyprus, courses in which less than five students were registered, would not be accepted and credited. The fact that we could not guarantee five or more students per course, led to the decision to suspend the programme. We sincerely hope that a focus on Cypriot Archaeology, within the framework of Mediterranean Archaeology, will change things to the benefit of Cypriot archaeology.

Strengths

Strengths for MA

Archaeological projects offer students the possibility to acquire practical skills and get involved actively in research.

Strengths for PhD

The library in the ARU is a meeting point of PhD students and staff and creates a vibrant research atmosphere. Supervisors are available and easily approachable.

We appreciate these comments of the EEC very much.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA

Practical and theoretical learning should be better combined by integrating compulsory practical training, internships and excavations. Academic staff might consider varying assessment methods beyond written essays and oral presentations (such as posters, role-playing simulations, or similar, in order to allow for a wider range of student talents)

We fully agree that practical training, internships and participation in excavations are valuable additions to the training of BA students and these are fields that we have already implemented with good results up to now – but of course we need to pursue these further. As to varying assessment methods, although these are not described in the descriptions of courses, various methods are applied even during the oral presentations, such as debates etc.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD

Students undertaking laboratory work need more support regarding laboratory equipment and resources. Students should also get offered courses in research ethics as well as training in finding jobs outside academia.



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It is true that laboratories will need more financial support, either from the University or from external sources. As to the training (other than the academic) for jobs, it is perhaps appropriate to ask the cooperation of other departments of the University of Cyprus, such as from the departments of the Faculty of Economic and Management

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Findings

Findings for PhD

Supervision of PhD students is unevenly distributed among members of the teaching staff. The competence of teaching staff that undertakes the PhD programme is ensured through what appears to be open, fair and clear processes for recruitment and development. The teaching staff is adequately qualified to implement the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure the quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.

The Department believes that the supervision of PhD is not unevenly distributed among the members of the teaching staff. Variances in numbers may be the result of new enrollments for PhD in some cases and just finished dissertations in others.

Strengths

Strengths for MA

The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad). Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged. The teaching staff publications are within the discipline and are closely related to the programme's taught courses. Many members of the academic staff have gained experience abroad and are able to guide their students in this direction.

Strengths for PhD

All members of staff are engaged in cutting-edge, even world-leading research and are therefore extremely well suited to act as doctoral supervisors; staff are also very well connected internationally and thus able to let their PhD students participate in, and profit from, their own research and collegial networks. The members of academic staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).

The Department deeply appreciates these comments of the EEC

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA

While permanent staff work under conditions that are fully in line with international standards, early career and temporary staff do not; work conditions and career prospects for adjunct professors (special scientists) are not presently in line with international developments. For example, the savings from a member of permanent staff taking unpaid leave should be invested in a proper fixed-term replacement for the duration of the leave, not ad-hoc course-by-course arrangements as seem to be the case.

Since this programme is suspended for two years now, this really does not apply to it, as we could not have hired any Special Scientists. Also, savings from the unpaid leave of one of our members, are not afforded to the Department – although perhaps they should have.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD



Members of staff who supervise more than the departmental average of PhD students and mentor a large number of post-docs should receive workload compensation elsewhere, e.g., a reduction in the teaching load.

We fully agree with that, and have discussed this issue in the past with the University authorities, but this has not been an accepted practice up to now.

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Findings for MA

The Master's programme has been suspended for a couple of years now. The duration of the programme is potentially too long (certainly the maximum duration).

In reality, the duration of the programme is regulated by the rules of the University of Cyprus, which we cannot change. The duration is from 2 (maximum of 4 years is regulated by the University, and we fully agree that this is a very long and unproductive limit). However, we could change from 2 to 1,5 years, but no less than that.

Findings for PhD

Admission processes are thorough and in line with international practice; student progression, recognition and certification are all well-defined. The maximum duration of the programme is too long.

We fully agree that the maximum duration of the programme from 3,5 to 8 years is very long, but again this is a general regulation that we have to follow.

Strengths

Strengths for MA

The programme is presently suspended.

Strengths for PhD

A good number of successfully completed Ph.D. theses. An MA is automatically credited toward the ECTS required for a PhD, which makes very good sense. The EEC saw promising and prestigious co-tutelle arrangements in place.

The EEC was particularly impressed with the PhD candidates we met: these were all highly motivated and mature young colleagues, who appreciate that the academic staff in the Department is highly supportive. Just as the permanent members of staff, they come with excellent international credentials already at this early stage of their academic careers and have a clear vision of where the field is going.

The Department is very pleased with these comments and wishes to thank the EEC for them, as well as for their great efforts and suggestions in general.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA

The programme would certainly become internationally more competitive if an intensive one-year option, following the successful model of Master's programmes in UK universities, were available. The EEC understands that this would require a change in the law, and strongly recommends to clear that path – especially with a four-year UG degree, a one-year Master's should comply with European regulations. At the same time, the two-year version should be retained for students who would need more coursework before embarking on a PhD, e.g for students graduating from a three-year Bachelor programme. Offering a part-time option would be better than allow all students to extend their MA to four years.

Finally, the Master's programme seems very expensive, perhaps overpriced, in what constitutes a highly competitive international environment. The EEC believes that adjusting the fees would help

attracting local and international students to the programme. Taking into account the cost of living in Cyprus, more funding and scholarships should also be made available to PG students in order to reduce the need to work and allow a stronger focus on academic work (and shorter durations for the various PG programmes).

We wish we had the option to reduce the programme's duration to 1 year. However, this does not comply with the University's rules; we can of course discuss the minimum of 1,5 years (courses for 1 year, and practical exercise for third semester), as this is within the limits accepted by our University. The same applies to the fees, as this amount is general and not department-specific. In that respect, we should of course try and ensure more scholarships for our students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD

The standard maximum length should be reduced to four six years with the ideal completion time somewhere between four and five years; concomitantly, funding opportunities for PhD students ought to be improved in order to reduce the need for work outside the academic environment. Offering a part-time option would be better than to allow all students to extend their PhD to eight years of studies.

We fully agree with these recommendations of the EEC.

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

Findings

Findings for PhD

PhD students were very happy with the support they receive but at the same time it emerged that the Department does not stipulate a minimum number of supervisor-supervisee meetings per academic year. The laboratories proved insufficient for the work of some PhD students.

In our opinion, we do in fact have a maximum number of supervisor-supervisee meetings, meaning that we are always available for consultation and in constant contact with our students. In fact, we often feel that we have to push them for meetings and discussions, than the opposite. As to the labs, whatever we have and we can offer, is always open for our PhD students, and in some cases we also arrange for them to use instruments in other facilities beyond our Department.

Strengths

Strengths for MA

The ARU provides an excellent context for PG studies.

Strengths for PhD

The ARU library provides PhD students in Mediterranean Archaeology with suitable workplaces. Students were very happy with their work conditions in this respect.

These comments describe the situation very well.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA

The resources available are adequate for running an internationally competitive MA programme in Mediterranean Archaeology.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD

Laboratory resources proved insufficient for the work of some PhD students who were thus forced to take their work to laboratories abroad, for which in turn insufficient internal funding was available.

Funding for the improvement of our research facilities, through University or mainly European funds is constantly sought after, and in fact, new European programs within the Archaeological research unit will effectively help to this direction. We have also to emphasize that the Archaeological research Unit is a relatively young institution, and started less than 30 years ago with zero infrastructures.



6. Additional for distance learning programmes
(ALL ESG)

7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

PhD students should have the opportunity to gain independent (yet guided) teaching experience on first- and second-year UG courses in order to develop a competitive CV and increase their employability on the international academic market.

This is a very interesting idea, which we will discuss. Something similar happens in a reverse way, meaning that we often have PHD graduates to teach in various of our courses for 1-2 hours, on subjects related to their expertise.

The EEC would recommend giving doctoral students the right to meet their supervisor at least once every other month.

We feel that we meet with our PhD students often enough, even during the pandemic, in cases even more often than once a month. We should continue doing so.

The standard maximum length should be reduced to six years; concomitantly, funding opportunities for PhD students ought to be improved in order to reduce the need for work.

We agree with both recommendations, and we have already taken some measurements for this: For instance, even the number of eight years as a maximum for the completion of a PhD is implemented by the University, we encourage our students to go through the various processes leading to a PhD (e.g. presentation of a written proposal for the dissertation, comprehensive examination) at the earliest point of time allowed for each one of these processes, and also impose a deadline for the submission of the final draft of the dissertation to the committee.



8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC had a very favourable impression of the degree programmes under review which clearly mark the Department as a world-leading centre for Cypriot studies; however, the suspended Master's programme is problematic and in need of urgent attention.

We fully agree with this last comment and are determined to proceed with the introduction of a focus on Cypriot Archaeology in the Master's Programme, as discussed.

Staff members and students are very enthusiastic and discussed with us in a very collegial and open way the challenges the degree programmes face.

In conclusion, we confirm that the programmes adhere to the EQF. However, in order to develop the programmes, we recommend the following:

B. Re-configure the suspended MA programme. There is no doubt that this important MA programme must be continued, but it needs to be thoroughly revised and oriented towards the international student community and should focus on Eastern Mediterranean/Cypriot studies and Archaeological Sciences. We have given several strong recommendations to this end in sections 1 and 4: these pertain to the focus of the programme, the language of instruction, filling currently vacant positions in the Department in order to increase course choices, the availability of scholarships, and the fee structure.

We have discussed these issues during our meeting with the EEC, and have in fact been discussing the same issues for some time, so we are well tuned in this respect and fully agree with the recommendations. We thank the EEC for understanding and supporting our ideas and visions.

C. More flexibility is needed in the Department's ability to introduce new courses. The regulation that only courses approved in a five-year cycle by the EEC hinders teaching cutting-edge scientific subjects and topics of high societal relevance (e.g. a course on pandemics in history could be offered at the earliest in 5 years).

We cannot agree more with this recommendation, and we hope that the University authorities will consider this option, as well.

D. PhD students should receive more financial and logistical support to undertake their research and should urgently be allowed to gain teaching experience e.g. by acting as tutors or co-teachers on introductory courses in the first two years/three semesters of BA studies. This would greatly help improve the employability of PhD graduates on the international academic market.

We also agree with that, especially regarding the financial support.

E. Update online information on the website on a regular basis; develop information in English language for all PG programmes and increase the course offerings in English language in all PG programmes.

This is also a valid recommendation and we will work on that.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
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Date: 06.03.2021

