Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date.

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:
  University of Cyprus**

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

  In Greek:

  Δημιουργική Μάθηση και Τέχνες στην Παιδική Ηλικία

  (3-8 εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό, Εξ

  αποστάσεως)

  In English:

  Creative Learning and the Arts in Childhood (3-8

  semesters, 90 ECTS, Master of Arts, E - Learning)

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

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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.*

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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We would like to express our appreciation to the committee and highlight the following comment about the program **"***The strength of this qualification is the innovative intersection of several disciplines (childhood studies, play and creative learning).***"**

Following, we respond to the recommendations provided by the EEC committee which enrich our e-learning program.

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
There is evidence that conceptually the programme has taken into consideration planning for smooth student progression. However, we recommend that UCY carefully considers students who will be joining the course at different times, especially if there will be students from subsequent cohorts following the same courses and considering that they will be admitted from very different professional and academic backgrounds.	It is great that the committee sees the fact that the *"The programme and course design are in line with institution strategy with explicit learning outcomes"* and that it takes into account student progression. According to the graduate school procedures for admission into the postgraduate programmes the procedure is clear and students are aware of this beforehand. Students submit their application to the programs which are available according to the expected requirements and each department's own rules (See the Guidelines for postgraduate studies https://www.ucy.ac.cy/graduateschool/postgraduate-programmes-places/?lang=en

https://www.ucy.ac.cy/graduateschool/admission-requirements-2/?lang=en

Postgraduate Studies Rules

It is important to note that students of this program will have the opportunity to submit their application once a year, sometime in April to start their studies in September. The publication of the programme and the process of submission follow the Guidelines for postgraduate studies. Then as the Department of Education does for all its postgraduate programmes, a committee is set to interview all the interested applicants.

As discussed with the evaluation committee, the fact that the participants will be from different professional and academic backgrounds is considered a plus for the diversity and interaction of each cohort. This is further highlighted in the activities they are expected to complete. In the different interactive activities, it is ensured that each professional will | Choose level of compliance: |

	have the opportunity to reflect on their practices and share this experience with the rest (See Appendix 1: Detailed Guidelines for Interactive Activities and other assignments)	
We would like more transparency and more specific detailed information on how assessment and assignments correspond to the level of ECTS (see course descriptions - in the Study Guide and include a table that maps ECTS per module to the student workload, activity, on a weekly basis).	In reference to transparency and more specific detailed information on how assessment and assignments correspond to the level of ECTS please refer to: Appendix 1: Detailed Guidelines for Interactive Activities and other assignments Appendix 2: Students Workload per Week Appendix 3: Updated Courses' Description	Choose level of compliance:

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
Diverse modes of learning delivery need to be systematically added across all courses such as the use of online forums for student interactions, online making games such as Minecraft, virtual museum tours, online simulations and a diverse use of applications.	We have addressed this issue during the development of interactive activities and assignments (see Appendix 1). Moreover the Technological Unit has run a market research in VR/AR solution for educational purposes and provided the coordinator of the program a detailed report (see Appendix 4: Report for VR/AR solutions). The coordinator and the instructors of the program in collaboration with the Pedagogical and the Technological Unit are discussing the different options and a final decision will be made before the beginning of the Academic Year 2024/25.	Choose level of compliance:
Detailed and clear guidance for completing interactive activities and exercises needs to be stated in study guides and online.	Clear guidance for completing interactive activities and other assignments has been addressed. Please refer to Appendix 1	Choose level of compliance:
An induction week (or a few days) should be organised to provide students with thorough training and confidence with library use, online tools and the e-learning platform, as well as networking with other students.	The Academic Development and Quality Sector in collaboration with Departments will run an E-induction Week for every distance learning program during the last week of August (see Appendix 5: E-Induction Week Program)	Choose level of compliance:
There needs to be a larger assessment weighting for interactive weekly activities – at least 20%.	We have addressed this issue please refer to Appendix 3	Choose level of compliance:
The assessment plans need to be mapped clearly so that students can see what is expected from them on a weekly basis.	A weekly table for each course providing all the necessary information – workload, hours, assessment etc., has been prepared. Please refer to Appendix 2	Choose level of compliance:

The educational content needs to be organised around individual weeks, clearly stating interactive activities and exercises and offering clear instructions on how these should be completed and assessed.	We have addressed this issue please refer to Appendix 2 and Appendix 1	
The wording of learning outcomes should align with the development of complex thinking skills.	We have revised each course's learning outcomes as suggested by the EEC committee. Please refer to Appendix 3	
The course 'Creative Research Methods in Childhood' should be compulsory for all students irrespective of the route they choose to follow.	We have endorsed the EEC's suggestion as presented in Appendix 6: List of Compulsory and Elective Courses	
Some course titles should be revised	We have revised the two course tittles as suggested by EEC. Please refer to Appendix 3 and Appendix 6.	
A course guide for the dissertation should be added.	We have endorsed the EEC's suggestion as presented in Appendix 7: Dissertation Guide	
An explicit component reflecting multiliteracies, including but not restricted to literature, poetry, lyrics, rhymes, digital literacy, movement, dance and drama should be added.	We have addressed the ECC's suggestion as presented at Appendix 1. For example, in the Play and Creativity Course there is reference to pictures, drawings and picture books as literacy tools. They are used to explore and study play, creativity and humor. The Mental Process and Representation course explores elements of picture books as a means to make the connection between creativity and mathematics. In the Creative Research Methods with Children course there is extended reference to the different multiliteracy stimuli employed in creative research methods to appropriately include children in the process of research.	

3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Pedagogical and technological aspects of e-learning training needs to be explicit. They have training in place for pedagogical and technological e-learning which is mandatory. However, UCY should consider ways of enabling the sharing of good practice amongst staff online (webinars of external experts or 'pedagogical café').	It is important to notice the EEC's acknowledgement that "*the University of Cyprus (UCY) has a clear quality assurance policy which takes into consideration regular and ongoing monitoring of programmes of study with clear channels of feedback*". As decided on 29/4/24 between the Pedagogical Unit and the Academic Development and Quality Sector, the following tools and procedures will be used to enhance the dissemination of good practices: - During the annual quality assurance workshop organized in December, a special session will include the dissemination of good practices. The University will invite both internal members and external experts to present at the conference and a similar approach will be followed for distance learning. - Creation of content on "distance education" on the Blackboard Ultra LMS where members of the pedagogical unit and instructors can discuss synchronously or asynchronously disseminating good practices. In addition, recent publications, and other educational material such as published articles, webinars etc. will be shared. The application will be launched in August 2024 and before the start of the academic year 2024/25. - The Academic Development and Quality Sector will record the good practices presented during the external evaluation processes by the Departments which are evaluated by the EECs, and will subsequently ensure that the academic community is informed through the University's internal access system MyUCY. The process will be ongoing. - As part of the continuous pedagogical training of the instructors on the issues of distance education, a seminar will be organized annually, which will include among other topics the dissemination of good practices and the training of the instructors. The above procedures have been approved by the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs who supervises the actions of distance education.	Choose level of compliance:
The use of new technologies is encouraged. However, we recommend	The technological unit has carried out market research to enrich the University's technological tools (see Appendix 4). The available options have been reviewed by	Choose level of compliance:

that academic staff engage with new practices involving multiple applications that can easily be operationalised in creative teaching for creative learning with arts, play and childhood.	Pedagogical Unit, the Program Coordinator, and Instructors for alignment of the tools' features with respect to meeting the learning objectives of the courses. The final decision of purchasing the appropriate tools, will be made before the beginning of the academic year 2024/25.	
There are plans to invite visiting staff to participate in teaching the study programme. The EEC strongly encourages invitations to involve scholars and, for instance, digital artists.	The university accommodates visiting professors, something which the program will take advantage of. The structure of the program allows the coordinator to take advantage of this policy. The coordinator of the program puts in a request through the Department of Education a semester earlier. Also, the plan is to have students attend different webinars or other online talks which are related to the content of the program and each course separately. For example, for the course Creative Research Methods with Children the National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) has different videos on research methods such as **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpnexrLZBT4** which can be used forstudents' additional knowledge and enhancement.	Choose level of compliance:
Generally teaching staff's research and publications are related to the programme's courses. The EEC strongly encourages the teaching staff to engage collaboratively on a research project that focuses on this programme.When the programme is re-evaluated in the coming years, the EEC would expect to see research related to e-learning by the teaching staff.	Teaching Staffs research and publications related to the program's courses are included as mandatory or optional reading in each course (see Appendix 3). Moreover, the plan is to research the e-learning programme considering the following information and details with the aims to review it,make it better and at the same time develop a set of publications. Possible Research Questions for such a study could be the following: 1. What are the perceptions of students regarding the quality and relevance of the programme? 2. How do faculty members perceive the effectiveness of teaching methods, course materials, and student engagement strategies within the program? 3. What are the elements of the online e-learning program that best support students' creative learning experience? 4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program in preparing students for from diverse career paths? To respond to some or all the above research questions the following data collection methods could be employed:	Choose level of compliance:

	- Online assessment surveys by students - End of each course students will be invited to assess the course creatively (e.g., through a construction, a drawing, or a musical creation) - End of the semester Study Guide changes- each instructor needs to provide a list of the possible changes that could take place. - Exit Surveys (end of the program). - Focus groups with students and co-ordinator as well as instructors and co-ordinator at the end of first and second year, focusing on good practices. - Document selection- assignments submitted. - Outcome measures- Track quantitative data on student performance. Based on the collection of the above data, <u>analysis could be quantitative and qualitative:</u> Both quantitative and qualitative methods will be employed to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Patterns, themes, correlations, and discrepancies will be identified to draw meaningful conclusions. After the analysis of the data the results will be noted as a means to <u>review the program and at the same time lead to a publication:</u> The study will provide valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and overall effectiveness of the programme. With such evidence we will be able to provide recommendations for the content of the program, the teaching methods, and student support to ensure continuous quality improvement.	
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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
To effectively document and support student progress, teachers are encouraged to systematically use and act upon Blackboard Analytics, which should be enriched by other indicators such as number of forum comments, responses to quizzes. There needs to be a procedure in place detailing when teachers should monitor and act upon analytics, especially in order to identify when to take action for students at risk. This is particularly pertinent in a programme where students come from diverse academic and professional backgrounds.	This issue has been addressed and the following section has been included in the "E-Learning Teaching Guidelines – Section 2.3, as described below *"instructors have the obligation to monitor students' progress in the course and send personal messages to students to develop a guidance plan if they find that their participation and progress is not satisfactory. The tracking process of student progress begins at the beginning of the academic semester with the implementation of periodic bi-weekly monitoring.* *In particular, students' progress is monitored using a combination of the following tools and methods:* *1. Blackboard Ultra Analytics: provides statistical data in relation to students' study time and presence in the system, facilitating the instructor to identify students who may have some difficulties or lack of time in relation to learning obligations. Other data also relate to late submission of assignments or other work, lack of cooperation with fellow students, etc.* *2. Unsatisfactory performance of the student in interactive and other assignments or assessment methods.* *3. Inadequate student interaction with fellow students, with instructor and with course content (e.g., participation in lectures, group discussions, peer review, synchronous or asynchronous personal communication with the instructor). Where applicable the instructor will contact students directly to*	Choose level of compliance:

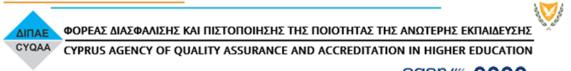|	*investigate any problems, they may be experiencing to provide support and guidance. The student support plan is individualized according to the student's needs and progress during the semester. Communication between the instructor and the student is on a systematic basis through the arrangement of face-to-face tele-meetings, electronic memos, individualized written and verbal feedback and messaging app".*	

5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Upon request, the EEC has received a copy of the useful document called '*Procedures Supporting E-learning 2024*' (in Greek) which presents the online course. This includes staff training, initial planning for programme, technical training and design of courses on Blackboard. However, there should be in place a process for reviewing (a) the final courses designed on the platform and (b) the structure and content study guide. This will ensure consistency across online courses and ensure the requirements such as interactivity and collaboration, are met.	The EEC's suggestion has been endorsed and the following section has been added in the document named "*Procedures Supporting E-learning 2024*' as Step 7 "Upon completion of the course planning and the study guide, the instructors provide the educational material to the pedagogical unit. The pedagogical unit evaluates and gives feedback. Subsequently, the instructor proceeds to design the course in the Blackboard Ultra system, which is then evaluated by the pedagogical unit to ensure that the pedagogical methodology of the course is aligned with the technological tools and resources.	Choose level of compliance:
Regarding the evaluation criteria of whether the resources are fit for purpose, the EEC would also like to see some more up-to-date research literature in the course literature. For instance, the 'Research Methods in Education' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison) in the research methods course has more recently had two further editions, where the 2018 edition is revised and significantly updated when it comes to for example Mixed Methods Research. While the more recent updates may not be available in Greek, it would be advisable to use at least chapters or sections of more updated references. The research methods and methodologies have seen a significant development during the recent years. Some of the recent publications which may be of interest and relate strongly across several courses include: …. Palmer, T., Burnard, P. and Burke, D. (2024)	We have endorsed the EEC's suggestion for more update research literature in all courses. Please refer to Appendix 3. Please also note that course literature is divided into compulsory and optional in each course study guide.	Choose level of compliance:

Inviting a (Re-)Orientation to 'Musicking-as-Play'. *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education* (in press)."		

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
   (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
There should be greater transparency and details of how ECTS correspond to studying and student workload (1.2).	It's been addressed please refer to Appendix 2	Choose level of compliance:
Reordering the set of courses to ensure the two research methods courses are compulsory for all students irrespective of their preferred, chosen route (2.1).	It's been addressed please refer to Appendix 6	Choose level of compliance:
The e-learning implementation of courses needs to be improved by including diverse online tools and applications that would enable social interactions and communication (2.1).	It's been addressed please refer to Appendixes 4 & 5 In addition, Blackboard Ultra provides multiple tools for synchronous and asynchronous interaction and communication. For example, discussion forums, messaging app, announcements, groups, peer review, feedback, teleconferencing, chatting, etc.	Choose level of compliance:
Study guides need to be refined to include details and weighting about interactive activity, exercises etc (2.4).	It's been addressed in each course description which is part of the course study guide. Please refer to Appendix 2	Choose level of compliance:
All courses (study guides and online implementation) need to be reviewed to ensure compliance with elearning methodology and principles (5.1).	Its been addressed see reply (5.1) below: The EEC's suggestion has been endorsed and the following section has been added in the document named "*Procedures Supporting E-learning 2024*' as Step 7 "Upon completion of the course planning and the study guide, the instructors provide the educational material to the pedagogical unit. The pedagogical unit evaluates and gives feedback. Subsequently, the instructor proceeds to design the course in the Blackboard Ultra system, which is then evaluated by the pedagogical unit to ensure that the pedagogical methodology of the course is aligned with the technological tools and resources.	Choose level of compliance:

Course literature needs to be reviewed as regards both Compulsory reading and Recommended further literature, and updated with more current sources (5.1).	It's been addressed. Please refer to Appendix 3.	

C.

D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Eleni Loizou	Programme's Coordinator	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
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Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: 29/4/2024