

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 26/03/2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

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

In Greek:

Μάστερ στη Βιωματικότητα και Ανθρώπινα Δικαιώματα

In English:

Magister Legum – LLM – Master of Laws in Sustainability and Human Rights

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** New
- **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)

The Committee noted the following strengths:

- Being a relatively new Department of Law (only established in 2006 with law students admitted in 2008), there is an impressive track record of achievement.
- Alignment with expertise, the programme builds on current expertise, expanding on the provision to include other growing areas of academic interest to diversify.
- Innovation around the assessment methods, in particular, the reaction paper which could be used as an opportunity to keep the programme abreast.
- Progressive involvement of external stakeholders in terms of programme design, with possibility to explore alternative ways of increasing student employment after graduation.
- Social outreach and civic engagement are a core part of the QA process.
- Colleagues are engaged with publication of Cyprus law with a serious contribution to the development of law.
- Potential for curriculum co-design for the future based on the experience of current LLM students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The QA system in place should ensure consistent anonymisation of the assessments (wherever possible), and benefit from having a rubric in place for the assessments to further ensure high quality standards.	<p>The instructors and coordinator of the Programme are in favor of implementing anonymised marking of assessments. The team has already asked for guidance from central University services on practical means to implement this practice for marking of assessments, including through Blackboard, in the LLM programme on sustainability and human rights.</p> <p>Regarding the rubric, the department has clear assessment criteria and guidelines included in the Handbooks of existing LLM programmes (in Greek), including a sample feedback form on the basis of relevant criteria, such as structure, bibliography, synthesis of arguments etc. Please refer to Annex I: Assessment Criteria and Rubric to review these as translated in English.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going forward, internal and external moderation processes should be more visible to ensure transparency. 	Given the current University Policy (please refer to the link) of teaching load allocation, a single instructor sets the course content, assessment topics and marks the submitted assignment.	Choose level of compliance:

	<p>Therefore, it is not feasible to have internal and external examiners acting as moderators for all marking. In light of the Committee's suggestion, in relation to borderline marks, the instructors intend to act as moderators in each other's modules as per below: the instructor for Mobility of Persons in the EU will act as moderator for Environmental Law in Europe and vice versa. And the instructor for Business and Human Rights will moderate borderline grades for Gender and Human Rights and vice versa.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In terms of the Admission Criteria, it would be beneficial to specify what the criteria are for EU applicants in line with Recognition of academic diplomas - Your Europe and The Lisbon Recognition Convention - ENIC- NARIC. 	<p>The admission criteria for all applicants refer to holding a relevant degree from a recognized university. To assure this, applicants who hold an LLB from Universities abroad must follow the procedures that Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KY.S.A.T.S). KYSATS recognises qualifications, such as degrees, diplomas or certificates which are issued by recognised Higher Education Institutions or by institutions, the programmes of which have been educationally evaluated-accredited. The reference of evaluation for the recognition of titles awarded are the titles (degrees) awarded by public universities of Cyprus in the same discipline and the titles awarded by State Higher Education Institutions of Cyprus. It is noted that KYSATS is a member of the NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres), ENIC (European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility) and MERIC (Mediterranean</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>Recognition Information Centres) networks.</p> <p>Internally, the Post Graduate School as well as the LLM coordinator are checking through the selection process that applicants degrees are in line with the KYSATS regulations.</p> <p>Language requirements are clearly stated. For good knowledge of English, which is an admission requirement, IELTS of at least 6.5 is required (applicants holding an LLB from UK or English-speaking universities are exempted).</p> <p>Pre-application consultation opportunities are commonly given for applicants to clarify recognition-related queries.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From a resourcing perspective, there is the need that the programme is made sustainable by ensuring appropriate staffing levels, so as to guarantee that QA processes are not impacted upon. 	<p>The Department of Law already has 3 (advertised and pending) + 1 (not advertised yet) vacancies opened for hiring faculty members to ensure appropriate staffing levels. The Department is committed to progressing and concluding these hiring processes in a timely manner.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EEC learned that there is currently no workload recognition for the supervision and marking of LLM dissertations, which is surprising given the scope of work/responsibility involved, including the need for second marking and the envisaged possibility for students to choose various types of dissertations (including research- and work-based dissertations). This can have an impact on QA as there is no 	<p>This is an issue that has been discussed numerous times at Department, School and University level with a clear position by the Department of Law in favor of recognizing supervision and marking of LLM dissertations towards teaching workload. Most lately, the School of Social Sciences and Education (under which the Department of Law is included) adopted the following recommendations that have been forwarded to the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs:</p> <p>A. Change in the Teaching Policy to allow co-supervision of</p>	Choose level of compliance:

<p>incentive system in place for colleagues involved in the supervision and marking of LLM dissertations.</p>	<p>undergraduate and postgraduate theses by faculty members and other teaching staff provided they hold a PhD.</p> <p>B. It is also proposed that the supervision of theses and dissertations be considered over a three-year period, so that it can be credited toward the teaching workload.</p> <p>Unless the policy at university level changes, there is no means for workload recognition for LLM supervision at department level, as the conditions for workload are determined by the law governing the University of Cyprus academic staff.</p>	
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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

The Committee noted the following strengths:

- A general strength of the LLM programme is that the intended learning outcomes support the need for students to engage actively with the teaching materials highlighting their need to develop analytical critical skills and thinking.
- Our general assessment of the programme is that it appears to support student-centred learning, teaching and assessment through interactive methods and a variety of assessment types, combined with tutorials with the aim to support students methodologically and substantively.
- Another positive aspect of the programme, is that there also seems to exist a well-functioning learning and teaching relationship where students also easily can get access to teachers for support in their learning.
- A strength of the programme is also the close link between teaching and practice where teachers organize training seminars and opportunities helping the students to expand their knowledge thus providing for a strong link between practical and theoretical studies. The existing formalised links and ongoing collaboration with external stakeholders makes it likely that students will benefit from stakeholder input in the development of their professional skills (eg through guest talks, collaborative projects, internships, work-based dissertations, extracurricular activities).
- There is also a strong linkage for students between teaching and research where students are often asked to be engaged in different research activities.
- In addition to the delivery of practice-oriented module content, students have been able to hone their critical research and writing skills, enabling graduates to continue with PhD studies following their LLM studies. In light of the expertise and international standing and networks of staff involved in the teaching of modules on the LLM Sustainability and Human Rights, the EEC is confident that research-led teaching will be delivered and equip students with relevant skills. Students' exposure to research and academic life is further increased by their involvement in research events.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While students interviewed during the site visit gave positive feedback on the well-functioning learning and teaching relationship with members of staff, the LLM team should ensure availability for support in all students' learning to provide a level-playing field. This seems of particular relevance for the targeted cohort that might be more diverse than previous ones regarding disciplinary and educational background, research/writing 	<p>The ratio of teaching staff per academic intake is expected to allow for close support by staff to the students of the LLM. Also, the LLM programme will have a dedicated coordinator who will be available to answer questions and provide guidance overall. Finally, the tutorials supporting each module will address issues of methodology, familiarity with assessment methods, research/writing skills, contributing to levelling the playing field for students from different backgrounds.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

experience, language skills and familiarity with assessment methods.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the secretaries of the Law Department confirmed their availability for dealing with student concerns, there does not seem to be a clear and transparent procedure for handling student complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning. We recommend that relevant rules and policies are adopted. 	<p>The University of Cyprus has a central 'Student Complaints Management Policy' in place, which was approved by the Senate on 16 April 2021. For the policy, please see Annex II: Student Complaints.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EEC could not confirm the existence of a formal procedure for appealing decisions on grades. The EEC recommends adopting clear rules and policies on this issue. 	<p>In accordance with the University of Cyprus' Postgraduate Studies Regulations,</p> <p>'the awarding of grades is the exclusive right of the faculty member. A change of grade by the faculty member is possible only in cases of an error and only with the written approval of the Chair of the Department and the Dean of the relevant Faculty, no later than 15 days after the announcement of the grades. If the change proposed by the faculty member is made later than 15 days, approval is required from the Graduate School Board. An exception is the change of grade for final year students where the change must be made no later than 3 days from the announcement of the grades.'</p> <p>However, in light of the Committee's suggestion, the matter will be brought to the attention of the University Committee on Rules and Regulations by Prof. Constantinides who is a member of the Committee in the next</p>	Choose level of compliance:

	meeting of the Committee on 31 March 2025.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the grading system was provided (p 10 of the application), the EEC missed access to general criteria for assessment of the different examinations on the modules. The EEC recommends that such criteria are published prior to assessment and made available to the students. 	<p>The department has clear assessment criteria and guidelines included in the Handbooks of existing LLM (in Greek), which will also be included in the Handbook for this LLM Programme. Please refer to Annex I to review these as translated in English. The LLM Handbook is shared with the students at the start of the semester. The assessment criteria are also reminded to students by each instructor, which may adjust the criteria as necessary to the requirements of the specific module in the module's Syllabus at the start of the academic semester.</p>	Choose level of compliance:

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

The Committee noted the following strengths:

- The teaching team of the proposed LLM Programme Sustainability and Human Rights is expected to deliver high quality research-led teaching, with colleagues complementing each other very well in terms of subject expertise.
- The extensive teaching experience of staff gained in the UK and Cyprus promises high quality teaching and adequate support for students to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme of Sustainability and Human Rights.
- All teaching staff suggested for teaching on the LLM programme has full-time employment which is adequate for ensuring the continuity and quality of the programme.
- Due to their significant collaborations and networks within the HEI, ministries, international organisations and with external stakeholders in Cyprus and abroad, all teaching staff is likely to deliver teaching on the LLM Sustainability and Human Rights in a way that meets current societal and job market needs in the field.
- Another visible strength is the fact that there is sufficient gender parity with more female teaching staff in the programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general issue which is relevant for this programme is the quite limited number of staff available for teaching the modules. It is recommended that the Department has a clear contingency and recruitment plan to ensure that there is a sufficiently large pool of teachers that can teach on the programme. The EEC was pleased to learn that a contingency plan is in place if the recruitment of a colleague teaching "Business and Human Rights" were not to be successful. In general, the EEC recommends making use of the flexibility the overall theme of LLM Programme provides, in that it can accommodate various specialised 	<p>The Department is currently in the process of recruiting a new member of staff on International Human Rights Law that is expected to teach on the Business and Human Rights Course. If they are not recruited in time to start in September 2025, then the order in which the modules of the Programme will be offered will be shifted to move the specific module to the spring semester of 2026.</p> <p>More broadly, the teaching team adopts a broad understanding of sustainability and is open to including additional courses on social/labour rights that could be taught by new members of staff or visiting teaching staff to allow for more flexibility in covering the teaching load.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

courses related to sustainability and human rights (eg labour and the social dimension of sustainability).		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In terms of quality and development of the teaching staff, it is strongly recommended that supervision of LLM theses is properly recognised and credited to the supervising staff member in their workload allocation. 	<p>This is an issue that has been discussed numerous times at Department, School and University level with a clear position by the Department of Law in favor of recognizing supervision and marking of LLM dissertations towards teaching workload. Most lately, the School of Social Sciences and Education (under which the Department of Law is included) adopted the following recommendations that have been forwarded to the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs:</p> <p>A. Change in the Teaching Policy to allow co-supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate theses by faculty members and other teaching staff provided they hold a PhD.</p> <p>B. It is also proposed that the supervision of theses and dissertations be considered over a three-year period, so that it can be credited toward the teaching workload.</p> <p>Unless the policy at University level changes, there is no means for workload recognition for LLM supervision at department level, as the conditions for workload are determined by the law governing the University of Cyprus academic staff.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

The Committee noted the following strengths:

- A very positive innovation is the practice of having an academic advisor for each of the students which can support the student's progress in their studies.
- There exist clear rules on the awarding of degrees.
- All graduates receive a free Diploma Supplement in English language.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Admission criteria lack some clarity and transparency, in particular in respect of how they are applied with regard to non-Cypriot grades and prior qualifications. It is recommended that the rules on recognition of previous grades, studies and qualifications are made more transparent and accessible.	<p>The admission criteria will be amended to clarify that they will be applied with flexibility to recognize previous experience, especially for candidates that obtained their university degree more than a decade ago, thereby promoting lifelong learning. For such candidates, that may not meet the requisite level of degree grade, account will be taken of professional and other relevant experiences.</p> <p>As for the application of admission criteria to non-Cypriot grades, the Department will follow best practices followed in Europe in recognizing approximate equivalence of grades as well as consult our international networks for guidance when necessary.</p> <p>It is noted that it is the Department's practice to provide justification for rejection of LLM applications through the online application system of the University of Cyprus. This practice will be applied for the LLM programme in sustainability and human rights, thereby contributing to the transparency and clarity of admission criteria.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
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5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

The Committee noted the following strengths:

- Library: Students benefit from access to the University's excellent Learning Resource Centre Library Stelios Ioannou (awarded 3 star EFQM "Excellence Award"), providing books, electronic resources, workspaces and student training. The library meets various needs through group study rooms, "living-room" style reading areas, silent areas as well as traditional library spaces. Flexible working arrangements are facilitated by fully automated services, 24/7 access to some workspace, and the specifically developed app that indicates the location of requested resources and is available in Greek and English – relevant for this programme's target group of working students.
- Skills development and employability: The Law Department has to date achieved an excellent employment rate of its LLM graduates. Staff is committed to linking the delivery of substantive specialist knowledge with current developments in the field. For instance, students/graduates of the LLM stream Criminal Justice and Human Rights confirmed the successful inclusion of ongoing legal developments in the teaching. They also highlighted how useful their studies have been for their legal practice. Given the scope of existing collaboration with external stakeholders relevant for the proposed LLM Sustainability and Human Rights, the EEC is confident that there will be a fruitful and active engagement with current developments and existing needs for expertise. This should enable the teaching team to tailor their module content – and have a positive impact on the development and employability of graduates.
- Student support: Students are allocated advisers. Students highlighted the accessibility of staff for their learning/research needs. The availability of the Department's administrative team enables students to seek support regarding practical matters. Students have access to the University's welfare services.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Adequate staff recognition and gender-sensitive workload allocation: The currently small number of staff and students allows for effective direct/informal access to support. However, the EEC recommends that the Department, Faculty and University revisit their expectations and allocation of responsibilities to ensure that staff gets adequate credit and recognition for their contribution to student support. Moreover, the EEC recommends that the work allocation is gender-sensitive, enabling all staff to find time for their own professional development while meeting the Departments' teaching and student support needs as a	<p>The Department is committed to gender equality, in accordance with the University's Gender Equality Plan (please refer to the link) . Administrative committee work is allocated on the basis of overall administrative workload of each academic member, both within the department and in representing the Department to University Committees.</p> <p>While the small number of faculty members and the current gender imbalance may reflect an imbalance in allocation of responsibilities, the Department rotates the kinds and weight of responsibilities among faculty members to ensure a fair and</p>	Choose level of compliance:

<p>community of colleagues. Both will be necessary to ensure the delivery of a high-quality and sustainable programme with a growing number of LLM students and their potentially varying needs (eg different educational and linguistic backgrounds and prior exposure to research and writing processes or practice-based assignments).</p>	<p>balanced allocation of work overall.</p> <p>The allocation of administrative work is also adjusted to accommodate maternity and parental leave as well as following an equitable allocation of sabbatical leave.</p>	
<p>Adequate resources and institutional support: The EEC understands (based on our on-site visit discussions with staff) that resources have been provided to the LLM stream Criminal Justice and Human Rights, enabling colleagues to set up an institute for the advancing of criminal law studies and structured interaction with legal practice and ongoing law reform endeavours. The EEC recommends that careful consideration is given to how best to support also the staff introducing the LLM Sustainability and Human Rights, providing adequate resources for tailored student support and thereby fostering the success and sustainability of the programme.</p>	<p>The Department has sufficient financial resources and income to support the establishment of the Institute of Criminal Law, if need be, until it becomes self-sustaining. This is without prejudice to similar initiatives other colleagues might have.</p> <p>The staff introducing the LLM on sustainability and human rights will also consider the set-up of a relevant research institute, once ongoing recruiting processes are concluded, and taking into account needs that will be identified in the initiation and early operation of the LLM programme.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Support of research/writing skills development: The EEC invites the teaching team to reassess systematically the way in which they support the development of research/writing skills of a potentially increasingly diverse student cohort.</p>	<p>Methodological aspects for carrying out academic research and developing writing skills will be covered by the tutorials to be offered to LLM students by PhD candidates at the department.</p> <p>Additionally, each instructor will spend some time during teaching to address methodological aspects relevant to the specific type of assessment assigned for each module.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>Finally, following the recommendation of the Committee, the teaching staff will make available resources to students in a centralized database on methodology issues. This can be set up as a separate 'module' with no ECTS credits, with its own dedicated Blackboard page and maintained by all teaching staff. The module will be available to students by September 2025.</p>	
<p>Availability of administrative and practical support: The EEC understands that increased secretarial support has freed academic staff from certain clerical responsibilities (eg social media, website) to allow them to focus on academic student support. The EEC recommends that adequate support is made available also for the needs of the new cohort of students. While there is experience with working students from running the existing LLM streams, additional needs might need to be met, eg if there is an increasing number of international students enrolling for the LLM Sustainability and Human Rights. This could include the needs for practical support regarding housing and transport. There also needs to be consideration and clear communication of what support is accessible for students during the evening, given that classes will be held outside normal office hours, without relying entirely on the good will of academic staff.</p>	<p>Support is provided for international students through the following services of the University of Cyprus:</p> <p>International Students and Staff Office: providing comprehensive support and information to international students before, during, and after their arrival in Cyprus, including information on visa and residence permits.</p> <p>Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service: providing support to students, including in relation to matters relating to housing.</p> <p>Information on public transport, including links to the relevant routes and schedules, is provided through relevant University offices and will be summarised centrally in the LLM handbook as already done in the current PhD handbook.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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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)

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Given the relatively small number of colleagues and the current lack of gender equality in the department, together with the currently unknown number of students enrolled on this and other LLM programmes, the EEC considers it important to regularly revisit overall workload allocation. A gender-sensitive approach seems important to ensure the quality and sustainability of this and other LLM programmes (eg the implications of extensive dissertation supervision and LLM-related administrative responsibilities for staff capacity to cover other tasks within the department).	<p>The Department is committed to gender equality, in accordance with the University's Gender Equality Plan (please refer to the link). Gender equality has been improved in the last few years of the Department's operation and ongoing hiring processes are likely to lead to a more gender-balanced membership of the department.</p> <p>Overall workload allocation is expected to considerably improve with the increase in the number of academic staff from 10 to 14 in the next academic year. Current administrative responsibilities will be reviewed and reshuffled to ensure an even more equitable allocation of workload.</p> <p>Allocation of workload is already gender-sensitive. Service and administrative roles are assigned equitably among colleagues without gender bias.</p> <p>The assignment of a female academic member as Coordinator of the Programme demonstrates the Department's commitment to promoting the development of female colleagues and assigning leadership positions in a gender-sensitive manner.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
The EEC recommends regular exchange between staff to ensure that the overall purpose of the programme remains at the core of each module.	<p>This is something that the teaching team aims to do regularly and especially at the start of the Programme, by exchanging syllabuses and course content prior to the start of each semester.</p> <p>Teaching staff will also seek to be involved in giving guest</p>	Choose level of compliance:

	lectures to each other's modules to ensure the coordination and overall synergy of the Programme. Finally, the annual keynote lectures and follow up discussion will provide key opportunities for the teaching staff to exchange ideas on the theme of the Programme and align their perceptions.	
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Ioanna Hadjiyianni	Programme Coordinator	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
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Date: 26 March 2025

