Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 12/05/2023

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  OPEN UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

  In Greek:

  Ποινική Δικαιοσύνη (1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS,

  Μεταπτυχιακό, Εξ αποστάσεως)

  In English:

  Criminal Justice (1.5 academic years, 90 ECTS, Master
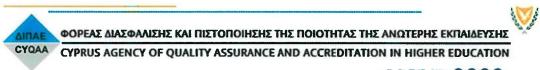
  of Arts, E-Learning)

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

- **Programme's status: New**

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: 1. Σύγχρονο Έγκλημα και Διαφθορά, 2.
  Αστυνομική Διοίκηση και Ηγεσία
  In English: 1. Contemporary Crime and Corruption, 2.
  Police Administration and Leadership

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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.*

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA **ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ**
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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
The degree title is Criminal Justice, but a specialist consideration of one concentration – contemporary crime and corruption - is only in the second section when the pathways diverge. Cybercrime and economic crimes in fact may not require corruption, and this should be emphasised more in the teaching. Furthermore, only some components of them relate to organised crime in the conventional sense.	The modules offered in the first semester are designed to apply to both concentrations, i.e. Contemporary Crime and Corruption, and Police Administration and Leadership. Yet, we cannot disregard the fact that organized crime (as a form of contemporary crime), is closely linked to the concentration on Contemporary Crime and Corruption. Indeed, modules become more specialized at the second semester, since, as the Committee has already stated, the two specialized pathways diverge, and it is at this point where the modules are allocated according to the adhered specialization.	
At several points, money laundering is mentioned, but there does not appear to be any sustained consideration of this: an area where reasonably or not, Cyprus and other advanced economies have been criticised in international evaluations. The EEC recommends that either the text or the course content be changed to be consistent.	In line with this suggestion, we will revise the study guide of CRJ522 (Economic Crimes) accordingly (course content), so that by the time the course is offered to the students, will reflect the Committee's comments. So far, the Study Guides of the first semester modules have been revised.	
Also absent are discussions of problems in the trial process, sentencing and asset recovery/forfeiture. This would help to give a more developed understanding of criminal justice as a loose-coupled system or structure. This might happen earlier on in the course, as police leaders also need a better contextual understanding of how their work interacts with other components.	In view of this suggestion, we have revised the study guide of CRJ512 (European Criminal Law), accordingly, and it is submitted for CyQAA's evaluation.	Choose an item.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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There were significant deficiencies in the bibliographies for many proposed courses, which need to be updated and also refined to a realistic level. In the comparative components, for both concentrations, greater consideration should be given to European countries other than the UK and France, to see what relevant lessons can be learned, both positive and negative. [...] More critical literature now available on international evaluations, on corruption and on policing would aid in accomplishing the stated course objectives of giving a comprehensive and reflective understanding of criminal justice.	. As a preliminary step, the Study Guides of three Thematic Units (Modules) of the first year of study have been fully updated, including the bibliography. These are all submitted for CyQAA's evaluation. The review of all the remaining Modules will be finalized in the coming months, especially following the appointment of the Adjunct Faculty (Tutors). Before the start of each semester, Tutors can edit and update the relevant study guides. It should be noted that most study guides, in their present form, are aligned to the current state-of-the-art scientific knowledge; nonetheless, the aforesaid procedure will be followed for all modules, throughout the duration of the Programme.	Choose an item.
The EEC draws attention to a further issue: the possibility of obtaining a master`s degree without writing a thesis. As explained above, the programme gives the student the option of visiting two optional courses (10 ECTS each) instead of delivering a thesis. The EEC sees this is a problem, for at least three reasons of principle. First, the act of writing a thesis develops skills of structured, disciplined, independent working and thinking, which will simply not be activated if one does not take up the task; [...] Second, writing a thesis, [...] is much more difficult than the given alternative, attending to two courses [...] students have an easy pass around the thesis, so this is a disincentive to try it.	While we do not intend downplaying the importance of this suggestion, we would like to clarify that the successful completion of each and every module requires the submission of two essays (3,000 words each); thus by the end of the programme, all students will have written 18 essays. This very fact, albeit differently from writing a thesis, does contribute towards the acquisition of three essential skills: researching, applying critical thinking and writing. Nonetheless and, in alignment with the Committee's recommendations, we have increased the ECTS allocated to a thesis from 20 to 30. We have also increased the required number of words to 25-30K words. Given that the number of ECTS allocated to the Master Thesis has increased, the mandatory module of each of the two academic directions of the Programme will now be elective instead of core.	Choose an item.

Third, the EEC fears a devaluation of the master's title, if it is granted in the same way for students who do and for those who do not deliver a thesis […]. At the same time, the EEC recognizes the pragmatic reasons for the programme`s designers for their decision. […] A compulsory thesis might make the whole programme far too demanding and therefore unattractive. The EEC is aware that even outside Cyprus, there exist master`s degrees without a thesis requirement. For the EEC, the situation calls for a trade-off, envisaging solutions that could have at least strived to accommodate the aforementioned principled reasons. […] This balance could have been, even though not fully attained, at least ameliorated if, for instance, the programme granted 30 ECTS for a thesis […] or if the different paths lead to different academic titles.		
The EEC does not rule out that its assessment might weigh too much on the principled side. It stresses that it has no intention to bar the programme. However, these remain issues to be kept in mind, especially for the future re-evaluations. These should specially take into account what percentage of students actually write the thesis. If this percentage is very small, this means that the possibility of a thesis is in reality playing the role of an alibi,	As already noted, we have allocated a larger number of ECTS to the Thesis, in order to encourage more students to take this path. Nonetheless, regular evaluations of the Programme (including the percentage of students registering for a thesis) will be conducted systematically, so to ensure that the percentage of students following either path (with or without thesis) are not markedly disproportionate.	Choose an item.

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functioning to legitimize a title which is earned almost exclusively with no thesis at all.		

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
While the EEC emphasises the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration, the online synchronous teleconferences and real-time collaboration among students might be hard to scale upwards if, in future years, the programme is expanded internationally and/or attended by many students across different time zones. It was not clear how the university would support this type of collaboration from the coordination perspective, while recommending the constant adaptation of their distance learning model to support this situation by increasing the asynchronous online interaction and collaboration.	This new Postgraduate Programme of Study "Criminal Justice" will be offered in the Greek language. Hence, the primary goal of the Open University of Cyprus is to reach out to Greek speaking students who are mainly based in Cyprus and Greece, both having the same time zone. Widening our target audiences is within our future plans; nevertheless, if students are located elsewhere in the world with different time zones, the necessary arrangements will be made to ensure that the majority of students are able to attend the synchronous group tutorials/web conferences. For instance, the timing of all lectures will be decided taking into account students' preferences. We cannot of course ensure that all group lectures can be attended by all students, and in any case, attendance is not mandatory. In this connection, may we point out that all teleconferences and group tutorials are digitally recorded so that students can make use of those recordings at their one time, pace and space. All Tutors have office hours that students can use to contact them directly in a synchronous manner. In addition, we shall ensure that the asynchronous forms of communication are strengthened so that all students benefit equally (e.g. pre-recorded lecturing if needed, group discussions in forums, interactive educational activities).	Choose an item.
Finally, the university indicated that current final onsite exams will be moved online, though without informing when this critical and strategic change will happen and what will be the procedures and technology to support online exams at scale. In the meantime, the EEC wants to point out that current onsite exams may not be in line with the learning style of online students, while online exams supported by proctoring methods cannot scale. Instead, the EEC recommends reinforcing the collaborative	The Open University of Cyprus opts to hold online exams, instead of on-site exams, to the extent where this is possible within the applicable legal framework. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online examinations were the norm. Post-pandemic, online final exams will be held for all students, as long as national accreditation agencies and bodies do not prevent it. It is noted that the final exams are only one of the methods we use to assess our students; still, it should also be noted that according to CYQAA directives and OUC Internal Study Regulations, final exams grades weigh at least 50% of the total grade of each Module / Thematic Unit. In all Modules, students will also be formally assessed by means of two written assignments and various interactive educational activities. As a result, formative and summative continuous assessment is ensured.	Choose an item.

learning activities and formative continuous assessment through written assignments during the course, if allowed by the governing and/or legal framework.		

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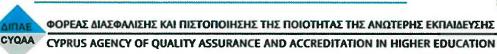## 3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
The only member of permanent staff in the programme is the academic coordinator. All other staff will be on short-term (3 year) contracts, and part time (in principle only for one thematic unit). That holds considerable risks for programme coherence, familiarity of staff with procedures and regulations, and ability for following up on students' overall progression closely enough. It may also impact negatively on staff availability for master thesis supervision.	We do share the EEC's opinion that all Programmes of Study should have an adequate number of permanent academic staff, instead of relying so heavily on adjunct faculty members, i.e. tutors. Following requests by all Faculties, the University can apply for new faculty positions (Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors) when submitting its annual budget to the competent Ministries of Education and Finance, but new openings for permanent academic staff must be decided by the Government. The Faculty of Economics and Management has recently recruited an Assistant Professor, and is in the process of recruiting 3 additional members of staff. However, these positions do not concern Law Studies. Granted this, in due time following the offering of the New MA in Criminal Justice, and based on student enrollments, the Faculty of Economics and Management will propose to the Senate of the University that two new positions of permanent academic staff in Law will need to be considered for the smooth running of the Programme.	Choose an item.
The academic coordinator is not an expert in the field of criminal justice and police management studies. Whereas the composition of the Academic Council ensures the presence of relevant expertise, it does not fully compensate for the inherent weakness of not having an expert in the field as academic coordinator.	The Academic Coordinator of the Postgraduate Programme "Criminal Justice" is Associate Professor Dr. Alexandros Tsadiras. Dr Tsadiras has been leading the design of the New Bachelor Degree "Law", and is the Academic Coordinator of the OUC Postgraduate programme 'European Union Law' since 2013. He has been, inter alia, a member of the State Aid Unit of the Center for International and European Economic Law in Thessaloniki, worked for the European Ombudsman's Office in Brussels and headed the European Union Law Division of a recognised law firm in Cyprus. He received his Ph.D. in European Union Law from the University of Oxford School of Law. He also received a LLM in European Union Law from the University of Edinburgh Law and a LLB from the Law Department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. As a lawyer he has taken on a number of cases before the European Ombudsman. His tasks as the Programme's Academic Coordinator are mainly of an administrative/coordinating nature. For academic issues directly related to the programme, he is	Choose an item.

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	assisted by the members of the Academic Council who have the required academic knowledge. The Academic Council of the MA in Criminal Justice is composed of Associate Professor Alexandros Tsadiras and three other members, of which one is internal, namely Lecturer Dr Chrysthia Papacleovoulou, and two are external; Dr. Angelo Constantinou (Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Cyprus) and Ms. Kyriaki Lambrianidou (Cyprus Police).	
A relevant research track record is required for being hired, but it is not clear whether and how much time is allocated to research (if any) in the tutors' job description. A comparison between teaching hours and time allocated to research is therefore difficult to make, nor is it clear to what extent teaching will be based on their own and up-to-date research.	As a matter of fact, the main tasks of the adjunct faculty / tutors are teaching and academic student support. When evaluating their applications, however, we do take their research output into consideration. In addition, the University has already taken steps towards engaging its adjunct staff in research activities. For instance, adjunct staff are eligible to apply as principal investigators for external research funding with an OUC affiliation, and they can also work as researchers in internal and external OUC research projects.	
The EEC therefore strongly recommends reconsideration of the staffing policy. In its view, the academic coordinator should be a permanent member of staff, and should be involved in part of the teaching themselves. It may improve the quality of the programme and student satisfaction to have a core group of staff teaching perhaps more than one course rather than having a larger group of different tutors for each teaching unit. The EEC encourages the OUC (but does not require it) to provide for research time for staff members, so that the programme can be truly research-based, in line with the view that teaching should be research-based.	Please refer to our responses above concerning staffing policy. For the time being, there are no new academic positions in law studies / legal sciences. There are two OUC permanent staff members involved in the Programme; one is Associate Professor Alexandros Tsadiras (European Union Administrative Law), who will assume the responsibility of being the Programme's Academic Coordinator (hence, we do meet the 1st recommendation made by the EEC), and Lecturer Chrysthia Papacleovoulou (Commercial Law), who will be a member of the Programme's Academic Council. As their subject areas are different from those of the new MA, it would not serve the purposes of the Programme to ask them to teach any modules. Regarding the suggestions of EEC, that the staff is provided research time, please refer to our comments in the previous point.	Choose an item.
Timely recruitment would assist staff (and students) in the	The timeline under which the Adjunct Faculty are recruited is quite strict, and depends on the University's Academic Calendar, and they become employed by the OUC a few	Choose an item.

timely preparation of course material and bibliography. The EEC recommends that contingency plans be made and implemented for continuity in assistance to students in the event that Adjunct Tutors leave/has health or maternity absences and are not replaced.	weeks before the commencement of each Academic Semester. From the commencement of their contract, the material for the Thematic Unit they will be teaching is provided to them so they can prepare accordingly. In addition, each Thematic Unit's material, including Study Guides and other material, are reviewed by each Tutor/Academic Personnel who will be teaching. Consequently, and upon discussion with the Programme's Coordinator, each tutor is entitled to make changes to the Study Material as they see fit. It is rare for Tutors to commence teaching a module without completing it, since their contracts are renewed per semester, and the employment time is relatively short. Nevertheless, in case a Tutor needs to terminate their teaching mid-term, there are contingency plans, and the University appoints a substitute Tutor from the ranking list of candidates for that particular Thematic Unit, in which potential adjuncts are ranked according to merit.	

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
The EEC notes that at the university level, the dropout rate from registration and graduation is around 20%, partly because people initially do multiple courses while they decide which ones to continue with. The level of dropout is broadly in line with other distance learning institutions. However, there is scope for improvement, and thus the OUC should have a rigorous process for data collection on the dropout rate year on year while providing measures to mitigate it.	The Programme monitors success rates and dropouts. There is a clear distinction between students who dropout before the beginning of their program, and students who drop out during their studies. Tutors/advisors use Learning Analytics and relevant reports concerning students' progress. They monitor student online presence on eClass and they can identify at-risk students so as to make early interventions and prevent potential dropouts. Moreover, the University has introduced Academic Advisors at Faculty level, who are responsible for providing guidance to students with planning their studies and meeting their learning objectives. Nevertheless, following the EEC comments, an effort will be made to further enhance the existing processes and potentially mitigate the dropout rates further by more rigorous mentoring monitored by course coordinators.	Choose an item.
In line with other programmes, student feedback is recommended to be collected by questionnaires at module end and measures for improvement to be considered as well as the effectiveness of these measures to be assessed.	Currently, the anonymised online student questionnaire surveys are administered at the end of the Module, following the examinations period. This is currently subject to revision, and the aim is to collect feedback from questionnaires before the final exams so as to minimize bias potentially caused by exam grades. Students' responses are evaluated, and a feedback report is provided to the Academic Coordinator of each Programme of Study. Teaching staff receive their personalised evaluation and feedback as well. Students' feedback is taken into account by the Academic Coordinator and the academic team of each Programme with a view to revising, if necessary, individual Modules, the Programme as a whole, and/or amend teaching and learning processes. A detailed report at the end of each academic year is submitted for each Programme to the relevant Faculty.	Choose an item.
Should it be feasible and within budgetary reach, more sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI and specifically Machine Learning are encouraged to be used to monitor and predict student performance and dropout, in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures.	The EEC suggestion is carefully taken into consideration. Concerning learning analytics, please refer to the above point. The University's eLearning Platform does use reporting for learning analytics, including the use of eClass by students, time spent on the eLearning Platform and the various group tutorials, grades, pass marks, etc. We do note the recommendation to search for more sophisticated AI and Machine Learning based learning analytics, and there is a plan to consider available plug-in options during 2023.	Choose an item.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
The EEC notes that there are specific regulations in relation to students misbehaving, including in relation to plagiarism or academic misconduct. To further facilitate the development of supportive communities of students, the EEC encourages further development of rules, and communicating them clearly to students, to prevent online (as well as offline) bullying and harassment as well as to educate students about privacy rights in the online environment.	When students enrol in the Open University of Cyprus they agree to a Code of Conduct for the use of the University's eLearning Platform. Moreover, privacy issues are dealt with as per the information provided on our website: https://www.ouc.ac.cy/index.php/en/terms-policy Recently, the University has issued an updated Code of Ethics, which deals with issues such as privacy, harassment, bullying, proper communication, rights for people with disabilities, etc. This Code of Ethics is currently only available in Greek though. Plagiarism issues are dealt with in the Internal Student Disciplinary Regulations. The comments of the EEC for revision of regulations in relation to students misbehaving, will definitely be taken into consideration and where the OUC sees fit, alterations will be made to the relevant regulations. The ultimate goal is to maintain an inclusive and secure environment among students where everyone feels free to express their concerns and complains. In addition to the above, in our eLearning Platform at the beginning of each course of the postgraduate programme, we shall include some relevant guidelines for our students, such as the following that is already mentioned in other OUC Programmes: "eClass enables you to communicate with your tutors/instructors and fellow students through the Discussion Group. This is a communication platform where you can post questions, news, information and other material. For the smooth functioning of the platform, it is advisable to keep the following in mind: a. Avoid conflicts, argumentative or inflammatory expressions, or provocations. b. Avoid any statement that may offend gender, ethnicity, racial background, religious belief, political opinion, profession, social class and/or sexual orientation of the interlocutor. c. Demonstrate a spirit of cooperation, solidarity and collegiality. d. When responding to colleagues' questions or commenting on information and news, please take care not	Choose an item.

| | to do so through a new post, but by clicking on the "Reply/Reply" button. This way, all comments on the same topic stay clustered in the same "thread" and are easier to locate.
e. Do not post information or comments unrelated to the subject matter of the Topic of the Discussion.

We encourage you to feel free to use this platform whenever you encounter difficulties in your studies or wish to communicate with your fellow students or with your instructors/tutors on issues related to your studies." | |

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6. Additional for doctoral programmes – Not applicable
(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) – Not applicable
(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
This is an evaluation of the master's programme in the Greek language for a Greek-speaking audience. The programme strives to meet the needs of local and regional personnel. The EEC broadly approves that this programme should go ahead and foresees strong benefits from modifications mentioned in relation to clearer and more contemporary bibliographies, a broader range of national references, and improvements to the recruitment and retention practices for teaching staff. The EEC commends the online provisions, but notes that care must be taken in the event that online examinations are provided. It suggests that further thought be given to the provision of a master's title without a thesis requirement.	All recommendations made by the External Evaluation Committee have been addressed in the previous sections. We thank the Committee for the fruitful comments and the discussions we had during the evaluation of this New Postgraduate Programme.	Choose an item.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Associate Professor Alexandros Tsadiras	Programme's Academic Coordinator	
Angelos Constantinou	Member of the Programme' Academic Council	
Professor Vayos Liapis	Vice Rector, Chair of the OUC Internal Quality Committee	
Erato Ioanna Sarri	Coordinating Office of the Rectorate, Quality Assurance Department	

Date: 12/05/2023

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