

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date:

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

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences

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



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)

Areas of improvement and recommendations PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences

The incorporation of courses from other PhD programs (from other faculties of universities) is appreciated. An increase of the flexibility of the program is expected. An evaluation of the added courses is of course needed.

We thank the EEC for this suggestion with which we agree. We believe that allowing students to take course from other accredited programs will significantly strengthen the program to the benefit of the students. As detailed in p.1 of Appendix 3 (Detailed Structure of RES PhD program), *“The DPC (Departmental Postgraduate Committee) will consider course work taken for other Master’s or Doctoral programs from CUT or other Universities to be applied towards the Prospective and Final Programs. Students who wish to apply such previous course work to their studies must submit course descriptions and an official transcript along with their Prospective and Final Programs. Up to a maximum of 40 ECTS coursework can be credited towards the doctoral program, pending evaluation from the graduate committee.”*

As we further mention in p.2 of Appendix 3, *“The option to choose graduate-level courses from other Departments or universities pending approval of the DPC allows for a broader and deeper research training in rehabilitation sciences, and allows students to make a more informed choice of their dissertation research topic. This is achieved by having an initial training year in which the students attend some specialized courses (theoretical or methodological) that are thought to significantly advance the student’s learning of a subject or specific research or methods skills. Examples include (but not limited to) the molecular basis of various disorders, pharmacology, specialized courses on the neural correlates/mechanisms of specific processes such as motor control and action, visual and auditory perception, attention, speech and language, and methodological courses that teach specific skills (e.g. systematic reviews and meta-analysis, big data and machine learning).*

All courses applied must be taken for numerical credit, according to CUT regulations. The Department of Rehabilitation Sciences requires that a grade of 7 or better must be received for each course submitted for approval on the Prospective/Final Program Form. The Doctoral Program requires that students maintain an average grade of 7.5/10 or better. If this requirement is not met, the student cannot proceed to the Oral Examination and the student will be given one year to bring grades to a 7.5 G.P.A.”



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

No comments.

We thank the EEC for the positive assessment of the program in this section.



3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Provision is excellent and no suggestions for improvement were made by the committee.

We thank the EEC for the positive assessment.



4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

information was clear and we had no recommendations for change.

We thank the EEC for the positive assessment.



5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

Explore potential for courses at a doctoral level with other programmes in CUT and internationally.

We agree that giving students the opportunity for taking post-graduate courses from other accredited programs (from CUT or other institutions) will be important and significantly improve the PhD program. As we mention in response to the comment in p.1 of the current document, in Appendix 3 (Detailed Structure of RES PhD program), we incorporate these changes into the program.



6. Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)

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7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

1. Note other improvements and recommendations recorded in the above sections.

Thank you for these suggestions which we think can significantly improve the program.

2. The courses offered are limited both thematically and in number. The committee advises the department expand the courses by establishing international collaborations with universities within the relevant field and with courses at a PhD level. Such courses must have approval from an internal committee at the department.

Following the suggestion of the EEC, we have incorporated these suggestions into the program which now encourages students to take courses from other accredited programs (from CUT as well as from other institutions) as detailed above.

3. If development of teaching skills remains to be a goal within the program, specific planning, strategies and milestones for attained knowledge would be advisable within the program.

We thank the EEC for this suggestion. Although the main focus of the PhD program is to teach students the critical research skills and train the next generation of rehabilitation scientists, we believe that the development of teaching skills will be an important asset for the students (e.g. increasing their employment opportunities). For this reason, we have taken various steps towards this direction, such as:

1. The program offers various graduate level courses that focus on independent student projects and presentations that allow students to develop their own teaching skills.
2. The program offers a graduate course on Science Communication.
3. We incorporated various milestones during the PhD program for student attained knowledge, such as the Prospective Course Program and the Final Course Program, Oral Exam, and Progress Reports.
4. Teaching Assistantships. PhD students are employed as TAs assisting RES faculty with their teaching duties. This allows students to start developing their own teaching skills.
5. Supervised teaching of undergraduate courses. PhD students who have completed the necessary coursework and have passed their Oral Exam are considered for teaching undergraduate courses in the BSc Speech/Language Therapy under the supervision of RES faculty. This allows students to develop their own teaching skills while they retain guidance and feedback by more experience faculty members.

4. An increased international cooperation that supports research visits/internships abroad is advised to heighten the candidate's knowledge and research opportunities, as well as the quality of the department's PhD programme.

We agree with EEC's suggestion that increased international cooperation with research visits/internships abroad will improve the quality of the program and the students' knowledge and research opportunities. These needs are addressed through the following actions and opportunities:

1. CUT is one of the eight (8) member universities of the newly established European University of Technology (EUT+; <https://www.univ-tech.eu>), funded under the European Universities Initiative that aims to strengthen strategic partnerships between EU higher education institutions. Students of the PhD program will therefore be offered the opportunity of mobility between these universities. Moreover, staff exchange between EUT+ members will offer students and faculty of CUT the opportunity for new collaborations.
 2. CUT offers a budget of €1,000 per PhD student for attending conferences or research visits abroad. PhD students are therefore encouraged to utilize this opportunity for increasing the visibility of their work as well as establishing international collaborations.
 3. Other mobility schemes such as Erasmus+ for PhD students are supported at CUT and students are highly encouraged to seek these opportunities for research visits and internships.
 4. PhD students are also supported via external grants (e.g. Cyprus Research and Innovation Foundation) and CUT internal grants to their supervisors (e.g. CUT chapter 3/319 for research activities) for research visit/s and internships abroad.
- 5. The committee welcomes and endorses the need to increase the department's effort in finding possibilities to support PhD candidates so that they can study for PhD on a full time basis.**

We are strongly in favor of this suggestion. For this reason, the RES department at CUT makes every effort to support students financially so that they can study full-time. It is worth noting that the majority of the current group of PhD students are studying full-time and are supported financially in some form by the RES department. Such forms include:

1. CUT has recently established a PhD scholarship scheme. Students are encouraged to apply and supported by faculty of the department.
2. Research and Innovation Foundation. Various calls are announced, for example, the call "Excellence Hubs" offers 3-year grants for €150,000. RES faculty are encouraged to apply and supported by university administration. Such grants allow for the full-time employment of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers.
3. Cyprus Scholarship Foundation. Currently, two PhD students are recipients of 3-year fulltime scholarships.
4. Teaching. PhD students who have completed the necessary coursework and have passed their Oral Exam are considered for teaching undergraduate courses in the BSc Speech/Language Therapy.
5. Teaching assistantships (TA). Most full-time PhD students are currently employed as TAs.
6. Short-term employment through internal CUT research funds (CUT chapter 3/319 for research activities)



8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

The panel were impressed by the physical resources, quality of staff and the content and structure of the BSc Speech Pathology and the PhD programmes.

The task of the review panel was made more difficult by late and poorly structured information. For example, there were some omissions in documentation (some of which are described in the above sections). Panel members received repeat mailings of information and it was often difficult to determine the new content within these large bundles of documents. There may be a number of reasons for this disorganisation: (1) the department lacks sufficient administrative support to produce full and well-organised documents; (2) deadlines for submission of information should be strictly reinforced by the Agency. The Department is encouraged to look carefully at the document specification and the criteria that the panel employ in evaluation. They should provide complete information that is structured in a way consistent with the specification. We recognise that the COVID-19 situation may have impacted on the efficiency in producing the documentation.

We thank the departmental team for their openness in discussions and very helpful attitude.

We thank the EEC for the fruitful discussions and important suggestions for improvement. We apologize for the late and poorly structured information, that is indeed attributed to the fact that administrative support has been recently moved between CUT departments. Taken together with the increased load due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has caused delays and confusion for which we deeply apologize.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

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