

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 20/06/2024

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Cyprus University of Technology (CUT)

- **Town:** Limassol

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

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό στην Περιβαλλοντική και Δημόσια Υγεία
(4 χρόνια, 240 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)

In English:

PhD in Environmental and Public Health (4 years, 240 ECTS, Doctorate)

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The students are encouraged and supported to visit and attend conferences and courses at other universities. Every student has an opportunity to apply for an individual €1000 grant for conference participation to present their results. This is available once during the PhD studies. Additional grants for student exchange could be announced and arranged as travel grants at the department or at university level.</p>	<p>At the University level, there are currently opportunities via the Erasmus office for student exchanges (https://erasmus.cut.ac.cy/), with an additional Erasmus liaison at the Departmental level (currently Dr. Theodorou). However, in order to further disseminate this information to the doctoral students, all new-coming doctoral students from 2024 onwards will be informed about the Erasmus office at the Departmental level.</p> <p>Further opportunities for students to engage with other students/ universities in training courses or events are provided via the EUT+ European University of Technology consortium (https://www.univ-tech.eu/) which brings Europe, Universities and Technology together linking 9 campuses across Europe, with CUT being one of them (Limassol campus). All such opportunities are disseminated directly from the EUT+ office at CUT to all registered students.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>The students emphasised the importance of being integrated in research projects and to communicate and collaborate with other stakeholders outside the university.</p>	<p>We understand the importance of stakeholder engagement and the majority of current and past doctoral students have been engaged in one or more research projects, as can be seen by relevant publications. Currently, the School of Health Sciences has an active Memorandum of Collaboration with the Limassol/Paphos General Hospital (SHSO) and has already co-organized 3 daily workshops/ seminars in the past year (one in collaboration with the Pancyprian Medical Association and under the auspices of the Ministry of Health</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



	and the Cyprus National Bioethics Committee), bringing together health professionals and academics/students. As we move forward with a more strategic partnership with the Ministry of Health and the State Health Services Organisation (SHSO), more opportunities for collaboration and communication will arise.	
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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

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<p>Although the compulsory PhD course contains two lectures on ethics and the individual PhD projects that handle personal data also need to go through a formal ethics approval process, ethical considerations are very important in public health research.</p> <p>To reduce the risk of misconduct and the like, we recommend a mandatory course on research ethics for all PhD students in the programme.</p> <p>Similarly, a mandatory GDPR-course (e.g. online) could be in place for those handling personal data. More course options on PhD level could also be considered; it could be a crossfaculty strategy.</p>	<p>All new doctoral students (entry Fall 2024 onwards) are now required to take either the Research Ethics in Public Health Course offered at the Master in PH (MPH607) OR the Research Ethics Online Training offered (free of cost) by The Global Health Network in collaboration with the University of Oxford (https://globalhealthtrainingcentre.tghn.org/research-ethics-online-training-v2/) (with presentation of certificate of completion).</p> <p>In addition, students are now required to complete the online course on Data sharing (9 modules) https://globalhealthtrainingcentre.tghn.org/data-sharing/</p> <p>The above online courses will be accepted towards their coursework ECTS from Fall 2024.</p> <p>A joint ethics and data management course at the School level (either in person or online) is being planned for all doctoral students at the School of health sciences, with contributions from across both faculties.</p> <p>All graduate level courses across faculty and university are already available as course options for all doctoral students, for ex.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPH605-Health Education and Promotion • RES507-Higher Brain and Cognitive Processes • NUR809-Special topics in Nursing Research Methodology • CIS541-Social Research Methodology <p>as well as additional accredited online courses, upon approval of their individual course schedule.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Research stays at other institutions/abroad are not obligatory. To enhance the students' access to other expertise, exposure to other research environments, networking opportunities, and academic and personal growth, promotion of research stays at other</p>	<p>As discussed above, further opportunities for students to engage with other students/ universities in training courses or events at the University level are currently provided via the EUT+ European University of Technology consortium (https://www.univ-tech.eu/) which links 9 campuses across Europe, with CUT being one of them (Limassol campus). All such opportunities are disseminated directly from the EUT+ office at CUT to all registered students. Additionally, international opportunities through individual collaborations -such</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>institutions, nationally or preferably internationally, could be beneficial. In general, access and collaboration with healthcare institutions and external stakeholders could be individual-level-based and it could be improved on a more structural level.</p>	<p>as COST training schools and short-term scientific missions are available and have already been used by current/past students.</p> <p>At the national level, the School of Health Sciences has recently signed a memorandum of collaboration with the Limassol/Paphos General Hospital Administration (SHSO), which has already resulted in jointed workshops and seminars (Department of Rehabilitation), with more collaborative work being planned. CUT and the School of Health Sciences are currently engaged in discussions/planning with SHSO centrally for a joint development of relevant health services for Limassol, which will further enhance access and collaboration.</p>	
<p>We suggest that the PhD programme consider facilitating possibilities for PhD students to present their work outside the department. Similarly, research meetings at the departmental level where PhD students can present their work and receive feedback, could improve their academic trajectories.</p>	<p>Doctoral students have been presenting their work in the Annual Doctoral Colloquium of the Cyprus Rector's Conference (participants from all Cyprus Universities) for the past 3 years. In addition, they can present them in the Annual Public Health Seminar and the Annual Doctoral Colloquium organized at the School of Health Sciences. CUT's Learning Development Network (www.ldn.cut.ac.cy) has started in 2024 a mock viva process, further allowing doctoral students who are preparing their viva the opportunity to present it in front of an audience and get feedback prior to defending it. Additional development opportunities, such as "Open Door" meetings and "How to write a paper" are available throughout the year from the Learning Development Network, as well as a summer training school for doctoral students with participation from students from other EUT+ universities.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

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<p>The programme could consider ways to interact more closely with both private and public external partners to identify new research topics and potentially also secure funding. The EEC proposes that future recruitments of new faculty members consider applicants with strong competences in qualitative methods.</p>	<p>This is already under consideration with regards to future recruitment. Currently, for any research needs on qualitative methods there is a strong and consistent collaboration (as shown from relevant staff publications in the field) with relevant faculty from other departments (namely Nursing). The following faculty are already engaged in relevant doctoral/research projects as part of the advisory committee/ researchers, advising on qualitative methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nikos Middleton- Associate Professor of Research Methodology (NUR) • Maria Karanikola- Associate Professor in Mental Health Nursing (NUR) • Aggelos Kassianos-Lecturer in Health Psychology (NUR) 	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>We also suggest that a short ethics course will be developed and made mandatory alongside the current course on research methods.</p>	<p>All new doctoral students (entry Fall 2024 onwards) are now required to take either the Research Ethics in Public Health Course offered at the Master in PH (MPH607) OR the Research Ethics Online Training offered (free of cost) by The Global Health Network in collaboration with the University of Oxford (https://globalhealthtrainingcentre.tghn.org/research-ethics-online-training-v2/) (with presentation of certificate of completion).</p> <p>In addition, students are now required to complete the online course on Data sharing (9 modules) https://globalhealthtrainingcentre.tghn.org/data-sharing/ The above online courses will be accepted towards their coursework ECTS from Fall 2024.</p> <p>A joint ethics and data management course at the School level (either in person or online) is being planned for all doctoral students at the School of health sciences, with contributions from across both faculties.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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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 finds no particular areas of improvement. The requirements and process for admission are clear and publicly available.	We thank the committee for their positive comments	Choose level of compliance:
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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
<p>The career guidance could be developed and promoted for PhD students (especially for PhD candidates who will continue a career outside the CUT)</p>	<p>Career development opportunities, for example CV preparation and mock job interviews are currently offered by CUT's student/alumni services. Additionally, the Learning Development Network which has been established at CUT precisely for supporting (grad)student and faculty development, provides the opportunity for one-to-one career mentoring for doctoral students. Furthermore, each student submits an annual progress report that her/his advisor and the student go through together, evaluate, refine and amend as needed, after constructive feedback by the advisor and discussion with the student. An example of such a report can be found in Appendix 1.</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
The EEC finds no particular areas of improvement. The requirements and process for admission are clear and publicly available. The students reported to be satisfied with the assessment, supervision and support from the faculty.	We thank the committee for their positive comments	Choose level of compliance:
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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
<p>The EEC recommends incorporating a broader range of courses within public health and opportunities to learn about different research methods to better achieve this intended objective. The eight learning outcomes of the programme highlight e.g. bioethics, but the committee noted that the course on ethics is not mandatory. However, teachers explained that ethical points are covered in the core course and students need to learn about ethics when they make their proposals for their dissertation. As bioethics are such an important part of public health research, a mandatory course could be considered.</p>	<p>A new elective post-graduate course has already been developed and will be available in the spring semester (academic year 2024-25) for the Master in PH degree. The new course includes contributions from across the School of Health Sciences, and covers a range of methods (including qualitative).</p> <p>In addition, doctoral students can already choose one or more of the available seminar courses which are part of the Nursing Department’s doctoral program and focus more on qualitative methodology. We also note that all graduate level courses across faculty and university are already available as course options for all doctoral students, as well as additional accredited online courses, upon approval of individual course schedule. Some examples of available course options at CUT are given below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPH605-Health Education and Promotion • RES507-Higher Brain and Cognitive Processes • NUR809-Special topics in Nursing Research Methodology • CIS541-Social Research Methodology <p>as well as additional accredited online courses, upon approval of their individual course schedule.</p> <p>With regards to ethics (as stated above), all new doctoral students (entry Fall 2024 onwards) are now required to take either the Research Ethics in Public Health Course offered at the Master in PH (MPH607) OR the Research Ethics Online Training offered (free of cost) by The Global Health Network in collaboration with the University of Oxford for the same number of ECTS with presentation of certificate of completion. (https://globalhealthtrainingcentre.tghn.org/research-ethics-online-training-v2/).</p> <p>In addition, doctoral students are now also required to complete the online course on Data sharing (9 modules) from the Global Health Network https://globalhealthtrainingcentre.tghn.org/data-sharing/</p> <p>The above online courses will be accepted towards their coursework ECTS from Fall 2024.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	Moving forward, a joint ethics and data management course (either in person or online) is being planned for all doctoral students at the School of Health Sciences, with contributions from across both faculties (discussed in the 67 th Meeting of the School of Health Sciences).	
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Aikaterini Lambrinou	Dean of School of Health Sciences	
Nikos Konstantinou	Departmental Chair	
Andrie Panayiotou	Program coordinator	
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Date: 02/07/2024

