

**Higher Education Institution's
Response****Date: 7th April 2021**

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Frederick University
- **Town:** Limassol
- **Programme of study**
**Social Work (4 academic years, 240 ECTS,
Bachelor (BA))**

In Greek:

Κοινωνική Εργασία (4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS,
Πτυχίο (BA))

In English:

Social Work (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor
(BA))

- **Language(s) of instruction:** **Greek**
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

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].

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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 for BA in Social Work

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1.1 | Internationalization of the curriculum [exchange of students, English parts of curriculum and literature]. |
| 1.2 | Attractiveness for students from Greece and abroad. |
| 1.3 | Creating a rank strongly identified with Social Work, relabeling the MA and PhD programs |

Department's Response

- 1.1 We agree with the Committee that as the Department grows emphasis should be placed on internationalization efforts and aim for reaching a broader audience. Clearly, for this the offering of the programs of study in the English language is a prerequisite and this is something we aim introducing in the near future; as discussed with the Committee. it is not prudent to do so immediately. We reiterate that the broader issue of internationalization rests in part with the University's strategic plan and general policy to open up programs of study to other markets.

Specifically, our Department's strategy forms as follows:

Period 2021-22: Stabilizing both the BA and MA programs with a local student pool that will deem them viable and sustainable. In this period, we are only beginning to develop our Ph.D. program, which will increase recognition in society and start getting noticed internationally – especially Greece. During this time, and after considering the committee's suggestion, we will strengthen the Department's English dimension – more on this, see below.

Period 2022-25: In this timeframe, we will try to expand the programs on a more international level and local communities in need of Social Work professionals [e.g., migrants, excluded social groups]. On the first level, we will increase our efforts for more research publications in English. At the same time, more bibliographies in English will be suggested, especially in MA and Ph.D. Programs.

Our efforts will also focus on the possibility of offering our Ph.D. program in English.

One dimension which we think will help start the opening-up process is the Erasmus program. In late January 2021, our Department established a new Erasmus collaboration with the B.Sc. in Psychology program of the Mykolas Romeris University in Lithuania. In general, there are already some courses in English concerning Erasmus students. These will be expanded, and a new dimension of this expansion will be offering Social Work Electives in English for other programs of study of the University itself.

- 1.2 The Department applies an effective strategy of attracting high-quality students from Cyprus and abroad. The committee has raised the issue of the low number on several occasions, both during our discussions as well as in their Report. During our discussions, this issue was associated to a certain extent with their suggestion that the Department, and especially the Social Work programs (BA and MA), should expand to attract non-Cypriot students. In this context, the members referred to the possibility of introducing classes in English.

The Social Work academic programs at Frederick University are pioneers in Cyprus. These programs were the first programs introduced, established, and still running in the Republic of Cyprus. Social Work, like other social sciences, has suffered significantly during the past decade due to the economic crisis, but also, as we emphasized in our discussions with the Committee, from the slow process of institutionalization of the profession of Social Work. *In this context, the Department's study programs are just recovering from the low level of student enrollments in the middle of the past decade.*

The matter of sustainability has been discussed in depth with the University management and we are happy to note that we have the full backing of administration to maintain and grow the Social Work programs offered. There is a clear commitment that, unlike other universities, we will not terminate the programs and we expect sustainable growth in the coming years; this is also expressed with the approval of new positions in the specific field.

In relation to offering the programs in English, we believe that this is not the first priority as, given the fees of the program, it will not be easy to attract international students at first. However, the Department is working with the University management to support its efforts for internationalization. Our first priority for

program development is offering the master program through distance learning or blended learning, which we believe, will help us attract a significant number of student.

It is further noted that we are progressively noticing a small but consistent increase of new recruits in the Social Work programs over the past couple of years, and we are confident that with the Department growth and the various remedial actions described we expect to have a sustainable increase in the Department's student numbers.

1.3 The Department accepts the Committee's recommendation of providing more narrow focused labels (names) for its MA and PhD programs. Specifically, the programs' names are modified as follows, as per the Committee's recommendations and discussions during the evaluation visit:

- **MA in Social Work and Social Administration.** This reflects the emphasis and focus on the social work dimension of the program
- **PhD in Social Work, Social Policy and Administration:** The name clearly reflects the focused scope of research interest in social work as well as the links with social policy and practice, as recommended by the Committee.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA in Social Work

2.1 English courses should be part of the study program in the future.
--

Department's Response

2.1 Please refer to answer 1.1

3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA in Social Work

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 3.1 | Full Professor in Social Work is needed |
| 3.2 | More students are needed |
| 3.3 | Promotion of study program in relevant communities and bodies are needed |

Department's Response

- 3.1 After detailed analysis of all the comments raised by the EEC, the Department has decided to announce a position for a senior rank (Full Professor) in the field of Social Work, with application deadline 05 April 2021. (Annex 01 – Social Work Vacancy).

For immediate remedial action, the Department has employed two academics with Social Work specialization:

- Professor Theodoros Sakelaropoulos, with specialization in Social Policy, as a Professor in the Department. Prof. Sakelaropoulos will not only assist the Department in an academic domain that the Committee suggested strengthening but is expected to assist significantly in research development and attraction of research funds.
- Professor Agapi Kandylaki, with specialization in Social Work and Multiculturalism as a Visiting Professor. Prof. Kandylaki will collaborate in the development of the PhD Program and the expansion of research activities in the Department, both in terms of publications as well as in terms of attracting research funding.

Both academics will commence employment from the Fall 2021 semester. Their CVs are provided in Annex 02.1 and Annex 02.2 of the response.

Additionally, the Department has decided to renew the announcement ([Link](#)) for the a Teaching and Research Staff position in Social Work for senior positions (Professor or Associate Professor) as the prior

announcement became barren due to lack of applications. (application deadline, 31st August 2021)

3.2 Please refer to answer 1.2.

3.3 The Department, together with the university central services, is working hard towards promoting the program and increasing the numbers. As shown, after extremely low intakes in the past years, mainly due to the financial crisis and the challenges in employment prospects, we have seen that the numbers have shown a small but steady increase in the couple of years.

We are confident that this trend will continue and that with coordinated efforts the program will continue to serve its important function for the society, as the Committee has also noted. Medium term plans for offering the program in the English language will also assist towards this effort

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

No comments or suggestions were made by the committee members

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

No comments or suggestions were made by the committee members

B. Conclusions and final remarks

1. The increase of numbers in all study programmes is essential to further development.
2. More research is needed to promote evidence-based teaching.
3. The internalisation of the curriculum seems to be important to recruit students from abroad

Department's Response

1. It is evident that efforts must be made to increase student numbers. Our answers in items 1.2 and 3.3 are aimed towards addressing this issue.

2. We agree with the Committee's recommendation to increase the research output of the faculty members of the Department. This is something that had already been identified in the Department and remedial actions were taken as well as new actions, as listed below.

The University has established an internal funding scheme for research. We are happy to note that in its first call, two proposals from the Department as coordinators and one proposal with Department faculty as collaborators, were successful and we hope that this funding would prove as seeding for further grant attraction and, as a result, reputable publications

As noted in answer 3.1 of this response, the faculty has been enriched with experienced professors in the field of Social Work and Social Policy with particular focus on research development, something that will invariably lead to improvement of our publication record

The Department has developed clear targets for publication expectations in terms of both quantity and quality. In particular, publications in journals/proceedings tracked by internationally accepted aggregators, such as Scopus, are given strong priority.


The Department will form its first research unit, the Research Center on Resilience, which we hope will become a defining characteristic of our Psychology and Social Work programs and will bring international research collaborations to the Department.

We wish to point out that some of these actions already started bearing fruits. Specifically, we would like to note that since 2018 department faculty members have published 55 peer-reviewed journal publications and presented their work in 45 peer reviewed international conference proceedings. This has been a significant improvement compared to the previous period and indicates the dedication and focus of the Department to this direction. Importantly, we believe that the committee may not have noticed this since the information presented in the application was outdated, given the gap of more than two years between application submission and evaluation. Having said that, we accept that further emphasis should be given to high caliber publications with international impact, something discussed during the evaluation visit. Important pillar of the Research Policy of the University, was the introduction of several research and innovation KPIs and the call towards departments to adopt the most relevant to their research work, forcing the use of certain core KPIs for all departments. Furthermore, short-term and longer-term targets are set by the Departments for improvement of the selected KPIs and consequently the advancement of the research and innovation activities.

3. Please refer to answer 1.1

With this opportunity, we would like to thank the Committee for their hard work and valuable comments and suggestions. We are particularly pleased that the Committee has identified the quality, importance and impact of the program under evaluation and we strive to address all recommendations made, as evident by our responses.

A. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. George Demosthenous	Rector	

Date: 01/06/2021