

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 08/07/2024

## Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**

University of Nicosia

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

Επιστήμη Δεδομένων (3 Εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS,

Μεταπτυχιακό, Εξ Αποστάσεως)

- **In English:**

Data Science (3 Semesters, 90 ECTS, MSc, E-Learning)

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

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

- **Concentrations (if any):**

**In Greek:** Concentrations

**In English:** Concentrations

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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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.*

## Introduction

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their thorough work during the on-site evaluation of the MSc in Data Science programme on April 3rd, 2024. During the visit, the EEC met the faculty supporting the programme, and had separate meetings with current students and alumni of the programme.

We would like to note that the report of the committee is **extremely positive** with 15 out of 19 quality indicators receiving the top rating of “Compliant” (amongst the choices of: Compliant/partially compliant/non-compliant) and 4 indicators receiving the rating of “partially compliant”.

Indicatively, **the EEC identifies the following strong points** of the programme.

- *“The programme is sound and well-designed following international standards. There is a balance between data science, mathematics and domain knowledge from industry”*
- *“The programme builds on the excellent distance learning framework of the University of Nicosia, as well as the university’s regulations with respect to quality assurance and student feedback”*
- *“The programme was designed involving external stakeholders from industry and academia and has a solid industrial involvement. The programme includes well-structured placement opportunities.”*
- *“The programme management and teaching staff are overall of high quality.”*
- *“This close connection with industrial partners is a competitive advantage for the programme.”*
- *“Overall, there is a culture of flexibility and a willingness to make things work among the staff on all levels (management, teaching, administration) working on this course. This is highly commendable”*
- *“The programme also offers several workshops on relevant and timely topics, such as the NVIDIA workshop that allows students to get 14 a hands-on experience on deep learning architectures on the cloud and receive a certification upon completion. These initiatives are commendable “*
- *“The EEC was informed that student engagement is overall high on the distance learning setup of the programme. For instance, approximately 42% of students complete the optional online survey on course feedback. This is commendable. “*
- *“The EEC was informed that the DLU has accommodated more than 100 students with special needs so far. This is a strong achievement. “*
- *“In addition, the DLU offers personalised training and consultation services to staff in the form of instructional design consultation (by the eLearning Pedagogical Support Unit) and one-to-one software training by the Technology Enhanced Learning Centre (TELC). These are examples of very good practices.”*
- *“The programme includes guest lectures from industry, such as IBM, Google Brain and Apple, in relevant and timely topics.”*

- *“The provision of the three documents per course (outline, activity guide and study guide) is also considered a good practice, since it allows students to be aware of what to expect for each course and help them to better organize their schedules to be able to succeed in their learning activities. All the above initiatives are highly commendable.”*
- *“As a result, teaching staff appear to be engaged in the use of distance learning tools. The above initiatives are examples of good practice and are commendable.”*
- *“Several members of the teaching staff have established collaborations with both industry and academia internationally, therefore strengthening the outward looking nature of the programme. This is a strength of this programme.”*
- *“The processes to detect and provide the necessary assistance to students with special needs is also considered a good practice and is commendable.”*

## 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
<b>1a</b> The EEC recommends that the full policy of quality assurance is made publicly available, not only upon request, but stated openly on the university's website	<p>The University confirms that The Quality Assurance policy is in Chapter 5 of the Internal Regulations of the University and is readily available to all students through the UNIC Portal.</p> <p>Furthermore, a link to the policy has been included on our website under Discover → THE UNIVERSITY → Quality Assurance.</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.unic.ac.cy/unic-at-a-glance/quality-assurance/">https://www.unic.ac.cy/unic-at-a-glance/quality-assurance/</a></p>	Choose level of compliance:
<b>1b</b> The EEC recommends that student presence is made compulsory to all meetings of the quality assurance committee.	<p>The student member of the Quality Assurance Committee is an equal member of the committee as the faculty members and has the same rights and responsibilities. The attendance of the meetings by all members is a responsibility and it is compulsory unless excused.</p> <p>It is a common practice that the head of the department emails the students when they are absent from the committees two consecutive times, reminding them of the importance of this responsibility.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
<b>1c</b> The EEC recommends that the student members of all three quality assurance committees be selected directly and independently by the student body, without any input by any other body of the university, to increase the impartiality of the selection.	<p>The composition and selection of members of the University quality assurance committees is in line with the 'Private Universities (Establishment, Operation and Control) Law 109(1) of 2005', as well as the CYQAA guidelines and regulations.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
<b>1d</b> The EEC therefore recommends that the quality assurance policy supports the involvement of external stakeholders in an explicit way, for instance by their representation in the quality assurance committees.	<p>The composition of the University quality assurance committees is in line with the 'Private Universities (Establishment, Operation and Control) Law 109(1) of 2005', as well as the CYQAA guidelines and regulations.</p>	Choose level of compliance:

	On top of that, the university would like to clarify that UNIC's Internal Regulations (Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2) and through the Internal Programme Evaluation Process a team of External Team of Reviewers is established that consists of 1 faculty member from another university who is an expert in the programme area and also <b>1 industry expert</b>	
<b>1e</b> The EEC recommends that the following information be included in each course description, so that students can readily see the expected student workload in hours (for the duration of the whole course): Student workload · Number of lecture hours · Number of preparation hours · Number of hours spent in coursework · Number of hours spent in exam preparation · Number of hours spent in exam	The requested information is now added to the study guide for each course. The study guides are included in Appendix A, that accompanies this response.	Choose level of compliance:
<b>1f</b> The EEC recommends that concrete measures are taken to ensure that all electives are offered.	<b>Course Availability.</b> The university confirms that with exception of one elective that will be also offered in Fall 2024 all other electives have been offered more than once to the students. Not all electives are available every semester. However, all electives are available once every academic year. In this case if students are interested in a specific elective, they must schedule their class registrations appropriately.  <b>Instructor Availability.</b> The university confirms that instructors for all electives are available, and the teaching material is already available for use. The university is ready to offer more electives per semester if there is an increase in the numbers of students in the program.  <b>Cyprus Quality Assurance Authority Regulations relevant to the minimum number of students per class.</b> In addition to the above, please consider that in offering electives (and any other course) the University considers and respects Cyprus	

	<p>Quality Assurance Authority's regulation about the minimum number of students per class, which is six for the master's degrees.</p> <p>Link to the relevant regulation:</p> <p><a href="https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/el/nea-ekdiloseis/anakoinoseis-el/85-elachistos-arithmos-foititon">https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/el/nea-ekdiloseis/anakoinoseis-el/85-elachistos-arithmos-foititon</a></p>	
<p><b>1g</b></p> <p>The EEC recommends that the programme covers generative AI, both theoretically (as is partially done by some of the current courses), but also with practical hands on projects and assignments involving, for instance, prompting openly available generative models, or fine-tuning them on large scale datasets requiring GPU computational resources. The EEC therefore recommends that more practical elements be introduced to the programme.</p>	<p><b>Generative AI.</b> The program indeed offers content relevant to generative AI and utilizes GPU computational resources:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recent developments in AI like Language Models, Large Language Models, Chatbots and Dialogue Systems are covered in course COMP-545DL Social Data and Natural Language Analysis.</li> <li>Advanced Deep Learning techniques are presented in course COMP-546DL Deep and Reinforcement Learning where the students have the opportunity to learn about Deep Generative models and Applications, Transformers and their applications to Large Language models.</li> </ol> <p><b>Computational Resources.</b> Students have the opportunity to work on GPU computational resources through NVIDIA's Deep Learning institute workshop where they use NVIDIA's cloud GPU infrastructures for real-world applications.</p> <p><b>Practice.</b> All the courses mentioned above utilize projects as part of their continuous assessment. In all cases the students must work with data extracted from real-world applications.</p>	
<p><b>1i</b></p> <p>The EEC strongly recommends that the thesis becomes a compulsory component of the programme.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been carefully addressed in topic 3e.</p>	
<p><b>1j</b></p> <p>The EEC recommends that careful consideration is given to</p>	<p><b>Admission Criteria.</b> The application evaluation process of MSC in Data Science at the University of Nicosia carefully considers</p>	



<p>the matching between the skills of the candidates to the programme and the courses offered by the programme. It is further recommended that students entering the programme with gaps in their skills should be offered courses that make it possible for them to build up their programming and mathematics skills before the start of the programme.</p>	<p>the skills of all applicants and makes sure that the applicants' skills meet the admission criteria. More specifically, the admission criteria that are public mention (among others) the following:</p> <p><i>A bachelor's degree in numerate subjects such as, Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Economics, Electrical Engineering, from a recognized university with a CPA of at least 2.5.</i> [...]</p> <p><i>The students should provide proof of knowledge (such as a certificate from a recognized entity or other relevant documentation) of basic programming and basic mathematics (probabilities or statistics or linear algebra or calculus) unless this background is evident from the list of courses in their previous studies.</i></p> <p>According to the above, only candidates with the appropriate background are evaluated. In other words, if the candidates have not the appropriate knowledge in programming and mathematics they are not accepted in the programme.</p> <p><b>Program Design.</b> In addition, the program is designed in a specific way where it does not assume mastering of programming or mathematics. The students are introduced to all the necessary basic concepts and foundations at the following courses at the first semester:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMP-542DL Data Programming</li> <li>• COMP-540 Mathematics for Data Science</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1k</b> The EEC recommends emphasizing group work in the programme.</p>	<p>The university would like to confirm that many of the courses (for example, COMP-544, COMP-547, and more) have group work assignments. More specifically in COMP-544 students must develop and evaluate a machine learning model in teams. The project entails teams of students</p>	

	<p>competing against each other to achieve better performance.</p> <p>In order to emphasize the importance of group work, the Guidelines sent by the Programme Coordinator of the MSc in Data Science are extended so as to include the following instructions regarding Project Work.</p> <p>“We strongly suggest that at least one assignment or project should be the result of collaboration between two students or more. In every assignment that requires teamwork, the students should state the role of each member of the team. The instructor should inform the students that an interview might be utilized in order to confirm the contribution of the team members.”</p>	
<p><b>11</b></p> <p>the EEC therefore recommends that students always receive some formative written feedback along with their grades.</p>	<p>The University confirms that written feedback is submitted along with the students' grades.</p> <p>In addition to the above, the introduction of rubrics (see point 2d) will provide more detailed feedback since each mark for an individual component of the project will correspond to specific evaluation statement.</p> <p>Moreover, the program has established the practice that the academic coordinator discusses on feedback and evaluation practices at the beginning and at the end of each semester with each faculty teaching in the program.</p>	

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<b>2a</b> The EEC recommends that group work is actively included in the programme's courses.	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in Point 1k.	Choose level of compliance:
<b>2b</b> The EEC recommends that all staff interacting with students, permanent and adjunct, be trained on distance learning.	The University would like to confirm that all teaching staff (permanent and adjunct) are informed and strongly encouraged to follow the seminars offered by the University's seminars.	Choose level of compliance:
<b>2c</b> The EEC recommends that all video content be subtitled,	The University confirms that all Webex sessions are <i>automatically</i> subtitled by the Webex Speech Understanding system. The faculty and students of the programme have observed the very satisfactory accuracy of the dialogue generation even though the speakers are not native English speakers.	Choose level of compliance:
<b>2d</b> The EEC recommends that teaching staff make rubrics for all courses and share them with students. the ECC recommends that this may be an element to be included in the Certificate Program for Faculty and in the DL Faculty Handbook.	The faculty have added evaluation rubrics on the study guides of the courses under the section "Evaluation Rubrics".  Also, as suggested by the EEC, a relevant paragraph will be added to the DL Faculty Handbook that emphasizes the importance of rubric development and provides with instructions and examples.	Choose level of compliance:
<b>2e</b> The EEC recommends that the student workload specification is amended to include all course activities.	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in Point 1e.	Choose level of compliance:

### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<b>3a</b> The EEC strongly recommends that measures are taken to minimize instructor shortage that leads to cancelling courses.	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in 1f.	Choose level of compliance:
<b>3b</b> The EEC recommends that all teaching staff interacting with students receive compulsory pedagogical training.	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in Point 2b.	Choose level of compliance:
<b>3c</b> The EEC recommends that appropriate structures are put in place to ensure that all teaching staff use the same, clear unit for measuring their teaching versus research time on a day to day basis, not only on paper.	<p>The University confirms that all faculty measure and report their working time <u>in hours per week</u>. For each faculty there is detailed information recorded in an information system. Example of information recorded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching hours</li> <li>• Research hours</li> <li>• Student advising hours</li> <li>• Overtime hours</li> <li>• Research time release</li> <li>• Hours worked in EU projects</li> </ul> <p>(all per week)</p> <p>On top of that, each additional academic responsibility like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme Coordination</li> <li>• Final Year Project Supervision</li> <li>• MSc Thesis Supervision</li> </ul> <p>is also recorded as hours per week and compensated if appropriate.</p> <p>This information is available to the faculty's academic supervisors (head of department and dean). All the above information is well documented and well defined based on University Policies.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
<b>3d</b> The EEC recommends that the university takes concrete measures to increase the research engagement of the teaching staff,	As indicated in the University of Nicosia Internal Regulations (Chapter 4), the University believes that research is vital to the provision of a stimulating learning	Choose level of compliance:

<p>and following this to boost the link between research and teaching in the programme</p>	<p>environment in which faculty and students flourish and fulfill their potential. The University also believes that involvement in research ensures the design and delivery of the University's curriculum is both up-to date and relevant. Research encourages the development of open and critical minds — a vital part of the University's education philosophy through which students interact with faculty and researchers who are working at the forefront of subject knowledge and professional practice and are also involved in research through student projects and case studies.</p> <p>The University supports all types of research by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively encouraging faculty to seek funding from a range of sources, including government, commercial and industrial sources at a national and international level;</li> <li>• Facilitating research funding through inter alia the support of University-affiliated research centres, inter-disciplinary research, collaborative research with other institutions and individual;</li> <li>• Using Sabbatical Leave as an important element of research development and support;</li> <li>• Providing Research Time Release to faculty members who engage in research, as defined in the University's Policy and, more precisely, the Internal Regulations and Collective Agreement;</li> <li>• Providing funding for attending and presenting papers in seminars and conferences, and providing access to research material such as books, journals and conference proceedings;</li> <li>• Investing in Information Technology and on-line access to research databases;</li> </ul>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining effective and efficient procedures for the management of research projects and for monitoring the progress of research students;</li> <li>• Developing systems for the support of new researchers, and for other research staff, considering the principles advocated under the European Charter for Researchers;</li> <li>• Ensuring that students conducting research benefit from an appropriate programme of research training in addition to the pursuit of their individual research projects;</li> <li>• Encouraging faculty and student researchers to publish their research results in peer-reviewed journals (e.g., indexed in Scopus, Web of Science), books, electronic media, conferences, exhibitions and performances;</li> <li>• Encouraging research links with the various relevant research funding organizations, government bodies, the community, industry, commerce, voluntary organisations and with the professions, regionally, nationally and internationally;</li> <li>• Developing and using performance indicators related to research in evaluating the implementation of this research policy and its associated plans;</li> <li>• Establishing the Research Recognition Policy (RRP) award. Publishing scientific research and contributing to global knowledge is a core objective for all faculty members at the University of Nicosia. The Research Recognition Policy (RRP) aims to encourage and recognize the efforts and success of UNIC faculty in publishing in Scopus-indexed peer-reviewed scholarly journals with significant reach and impact, which is consistent with UNIC's strategy for excellence in international research reputation and rankings;</li> </ul>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing the University of Nicosia Seed Grant (UNICSG) scheme. UNICSG encourages research though internally allocated funding meant to foster the research activities of the University of Nicosia researchers as follows: a) the fund supports an internal research grant scheme designed to provide seed funding to encourage and support UNIC researchers particularly those who are in the initial stages of building up their experience and with a potential to secure external research grants; and b) the fund is targeted at track-record improvement of UNIC researchers supporting the publication of SCOPUS covered documents, implementation of small pilot research projects for obtaining data and the potential for development of external grant application.</li> </ul> <p>In achieving the above, the University of Nicosia's policies and procedures are included as Appendix B, attached with this response.</p>	
<p><b>3e</b></p> <p>The master thesis is optional, which is compatible with Cypriot law and in line with the university strategy. However, this lack of focus on independent study and training in the research process does not compare positively with respect to other international programmes.</p> <p>The EEC therefore recommends that the thesis becomes compulsory, not only for the student gains that this brings, but also as a way to encourage all teaching staff to supervise topics closer to research.</p>	<p><b>Students and Research.</b> We would like to stress that the MSc in Data Science puts particular emphasis in developing the students research skills. Specifically, the <i>compulsory</i> course "COMP-592DL Project in Data Science" in combination with the <i>compulsory</i> "COMP-501DL Research Seminars and Methodology", are designed to cultivate the research skills of the students of the MSc. It should also be noted that a significant part of the student assessment in COMP-501DL (50% of the course grade) includes a literature survey on a specific topic that is proposed by the student so that it captivates his/her research interests, with the findings written in</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>a form of a scientific paper and presented by each student in a conference-like setting.</p> <p><b>Thesis.</b> In case the students are interested and performs well in the above two courses they can take the thesis options which is always available. The academic coordinators and student advisors always recommend the Thesis option for students that are performing well in the two courses mentioned above.</p> <p>The University would also like to highlight the EEC's comment '.... optional thesis is compatible with Cypriot law and in line with the university strategy". Indeed, this is the case and the practice adopted by many Universities in Cyprus. The University feels that having the thesis obligatory will make the program less flexible especially for those students who would like to focus on more than wish to specialize in subjects of Data Science instead of specializing in a particular subject area. Making the Thesis obligatory, will limit the students to only 1 elective. This 1 elective is significantly restrictive and will limit the opportunity of students to explore advanced courses such a Big Data Processing, Deep Learning, Artificial Intelligence, as well as extend their knowledge in domain specific topics such as Medicine and Bioinformatics, Mining Social and Web Data, Business Intelligence, and Data Privacy and Ethics. The Programme Development Sub-Committee for the MSc in Data Science of the University of Nicosia, carefully selected these courses in order to cover a wide range of advanced and domain-specific skills in Data Science, after a thorough</p>	
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	<p>dialogue process with the industry and academia.</p> <p>Furthermore, we note that the programme committee and the faculty advisors are encouraging students who wish to follow an academic career or work in R&amp;D to opt for the thesis option. On the other hand, students who wish to extend their expertise in crucial industry areas where data science is applied, are encouraged to choose the non-thesis option.</p> <p>Note that following the above practices, all of the thesis produced were of very high quality. All of the theses were graded with “A” and all of them have publication potential and in some cases, publications were produced. See an example below (student name is highlighted with bold typeface):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Julie Durand</b>, Athena Stassopoulou, Ioannis Katakis: Adverse Drug Reaction Classification in Social Media: A Multi-Label Approach. WI/IAT 2023: 280-286</li> </ul> <p><b>Research and Collaboration with Faculty.</b> The student-faculty collaboration is enhanced through the work-study scholarships where applicants can apply for a scholarship and get a discount in their fees by working as a <b>research assistant (junior researcher)</b> in collaboration with our faculty. Many of these collaborations led to publications. There were also cases where students were hired as junior researchers in the context of European Research projects. Please see below some publication with MSc Students of the MSc in Data Science, in the context of work-study scholarships and in the context of</p>	
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	<p>European-Funded research projects. Names of students are highlighted with bold typeface.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Constantinos Romantzis</b>, Alexandros Karakasidis, <b>Evangelos Mathioudis</b>, Ioannis Katakis, Pantelis Agathangelou, Jahna Otterbacher: Subjectivity, Polarity and the Aspect of Time in the Evolution of Crowd-Sourced Biographies. ICWE 2024: 281-295</li> <li>• Andreas Triantafyllidis, Sofia Segkouli, Stelios Zygoris, Christina Michailidou, Konstantinos Avgerinakis, Evangelia Fappa, Sophia Vassiliades, Anastasia Bougea, Nikos Papagiannakis, Ioannis Katakis, <b>Evangelos Mathioudis</b>, Alexandru Sorici, Lidia Bajenaru, Valentina Tagueo, Francesco Camonita, Christoniki Magantheve, Stefanos Vrochidis, Ludovico Pedullà, Giampaolo Brichetto, Panagiotis Tsakanikas, Konstantinos Votis, Dimitrios Tzovaras: Mobile App Interventions for Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis and Stroke: A Systematic Literature Review. Sensors 23(7): 3396 (2023)</li> <li>• Chloe Chira, <b>Evangelos Mathioudis</b>, Christina Michailidou, Pantelis Agathangelou, Georgia Christodoulou, Ioannis Katakis, Efstratios Kontopoulos, Konstantinos Avgerinakis: An Affective Multi-modal Conversational Agent for Non Intrusive Data Collection from Patients with Brain Diseases. CONVERSATIONS 2022: 134-149</li> </ul>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Christoniki Maga-Nteve, Efstratios Kontopoulos, Nikos Tsolakis, Ioannis Katakis, <b>Evangelos Mathioudis</b>, Panagiotis Mitzias, Konstantinos Avgerinakis, Georgios Meditskos, Anastasios Karakostas, Stefanos Vrochidis, Ioannis Kompatsiaris: A Semantic Technologies Toolkit for Bridging Early Diagnosis and Treatment in Brain Diseases: Report from the Ongoing EU-Funded Research Project ALAMEDA. MTSR 2021: 349-354</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion.</b> The University therefore feels that the flexibility of the thesis/nonthesis option is a strong feature of the programme and indeed the basic reason why Universities in Cyprus adopt this as one option for their programmes. At the same time as discussed above the flexibility does not compromise the research potential of our student or the student-faculty collaboration in research.</p> <p>Therefore, if the EEC agrees with this justification, the University would like to leave the thesis optional.</p>	
<p><b>3f</b> The EEC recommends that a careful long term gender balance strategy is designed, communicated to all staff members, and implemented in practice</p>	<p>The University already has a gender equality plan which is communicated and implemented in practice. The Gender Equality plan as well as the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan of UNIC is publicly available at the following link:</p> <p><a href="https://www.unic.ac.cy/unic-at-a-glance/university-of-nicosia-gender-equality-plan-gep/">https://www.unic.ac.cy/unic-at-a-glance/university-of-nicosia-gender-equality-plan-gep/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.unic.ac.cy/unic-at-a-glance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy/">https://www.unic.ac.cy/unic-at-a-glance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy/</a></p>	

	The documents are also available at Appendix C.	
<b>3g</b> The EEC was informed that junior staff members have a mentor, but that this is not written down as a policy, but rather a practice they have adopted. The EEC recognizes that this is indeed an excellent practice and recommends that it becomes part of the university's formal regulations.	We appreciate the acknowledgment of the EEC that this is indeed already a practice within our Department and program. The recommendation of the EEC for a formal University policy is forwarded to the appropriate University bodies for consideration.	
<b>3h</b> The EEC recommends that efforts are made to lower the number of adjunct staff.	The University would like to confirm that the majority of courses (65%) are taught by permanent staff.  Due to the collaboration with Expedia however, and the industry element of the MSc, the involvement of faculty with industry experience is not only necessary but a major advantage of the program.	
<b>3i</b> The EEC recommends that all teaching staff (both permanent and adjunct) are uptodate with basic day to day procedures and D&I initiatives, and that these are implemented by all.	All University practices and processes that are necessary for faculty to carry out their duties are included in Internal Regulations. The Internal Regulation are listed in the faculty portal. All faculty are instructed to familiarize themselves with the regulations. In addition, every new faculty member (full-time or part-time) has a mentor faculty (the program coordinator) who guides the faculty on all important University processes.	

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
4a The EEC recommends that the practice of providing grades and written feedback is strongly enforced by all.	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in 1l.	Choose level of compliance:
4b The EEC recommends that the marking rubric should be publicly available to all students	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in 2d.	Choose level of compliance:
4c the EEC recommends that information about who designed the marking rubric and what is the process of revising it should be clearly stated in the Quality Assurance policy.	Rubrics are implemented as shown in Appendix A. Since rubrics are included in study guides, they are accessible to all students.	Choose level of compliance:
4d For industry-based projects, the EEC recommends that students receive in advance information about potential intellectual property issues pertaining to the work they complete while working on an industrial project. This information should be communicated to all students prior the commencement of their project work, not upon request by students.	A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be signed between the students and the companies, in which students acknowledge that they have been informed about the patent or copyright status of a specific product or service they will be working with during their practicum.	Choose level of compliance:
4e the EEC recommends that extra courses should be offered to students with gaps in their programming skills,	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in topic 1j.	Choose level of compliance:
4f The university has made great progress in incorporating learning analytics to detect students on-risk and act accordingly. The EEC recommends automating these systems	The systems for generating learning analytics reports for detecting at-risk students are already automated, and reports are automatically generated and communicated to the teaching staff and academic advisors at the Distance Learning Administration Unit. Nevertheless, the actions based on these reports (i.e. communication	

	with the students at-risk, student withdrawal from a course based on the analytics reports etc.) are not automated. These actions are performed by the teaching staff or an academic advisor manually, to avoid potential mistakes from misreading of the reports.	
4g the EEC recommends that the DL Faculty Handbook and pedagogical model are updated to include guidelines about learning analytics, including a clear definition of dropout, and strategies to include analytics to promote the engagement and reduce dropout of students.	We will make sure that the EEC recommendations on learning analytics and their use to reduce dropout rates will be included in the next update of the “DL Faculty Handbook” and the “Pedagogical Model for eLearning” to accurately reflect our practices at UNIC.	

## 5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
5a the EEC recommends that course instructors always provide written feedback to students	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in topic 1l.	Choose level of compliance:
5b it is important that all the faculty who teach in the programme have completed these courses and are aware of the aforementioned documents	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in topic 2b.	Choose level of compliance:
5c There is no information in the DL Faculty handbook about what is considered as good formative feedback and how to provide it. Since giving useful formative feedback is hard, the ECC believes it would be beneficial to add this information in the faculty handbook.	Information of formative assessment is included in the “UNIC Pedagogical Model for eLearning”. We will make sure that in the next update of the “DL Faculty Handbook” similar information will also be included in it. We would also like to highlight that our faculty members are trained on formative and summative assessment during the “UNIC Faculty Training and Development Seminar on Teaching and Learning”, during the dedicated for assessment session (Workshop 9) titled “Measuring learning outcomes and Assessment Methods for online and face-to-face courses”	Choose level of compliance:
5d The EEC recommends that all video material is subtitled.	This recommendation has been carefully addressed in topic 2c.	Choose level of compliance:

## 6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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## 7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	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
Based on the examination and evaluation of the accreditation materials and the physical site visit, the EEC concludes that some of the required standards are met fully, and some of the required standards are met partially. The EEC has made a list of recommendations targeted to improving the required standards and raising the level of the programme internationally. These recommendations are marked in bold and highlighted throughout this document.	<p>The institution would like to thank the EEC for the constructive feedback.</p> <p>All recommendations have been carefully addressed in the sections above.</p> <p>The institution believe that the implementation of the EEC's recommendation will improve the quality of the programme.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
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### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Dr George Gregoriou</b>	Dean of the School of Sciences and Engineering	
<b>Prof Athena Stassopoulou</b>	Head of Computer Science Department	
<b>Prof Ioannis Katakis</b>	Programme Coordinator, MSc in Data Science	

**Date:** 08/07/2024

