

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: Date.

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study Programme(s) of study - Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

**Programme 3 – Nursing, PhD, 3 years, 180 ECTS,
Third Cycle**

In Greek: Νοσηλευτική (3 έτη / 180 ECTS,
Διδακτορικό)

In English: Nursing (3 years / 180 ECTS, PhD)

Language(s) of instruction: Greek/English

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):** N/A

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 300.1.1/2 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.*
- *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 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 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*



A. Introduction

We would like to thank the members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their valuable insights and thorough work during the evaluation of the BSc programme in Nursing, the MSc in Contemporary Nursing, and PhD in Nursing on November 2nd and 3rd, 2021.

We appreciate the comment of the EEC that the department as a whole appears to be managed appropriately and some disciplines are thriving. Additionally, we value the comment by the EEC that the three Nursing programs have “a strong ground and well-established platform for future development”. Taking into consideration the EEC’s comments for further improvement and strengthening the academic profile of the Nursing Programs, we have decided not to proceed with the accreditation of the MSc programme and thus focus on the other two programmes (BSc and PhD).

We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation.

Below you will find detailed responses to all recommendations regarding the PhD Nursing programme whilst the findings of the EEC have been summarized. Any comments coming directly from the EEC are shown in italics.

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Findings by the EEC:

- *The quality assurance of the PhD program is well established and follows the general guidelines of doctoral programs at the University of Nicosia.*
- *The program is very much individual based and students work in close contact with their supervisors.*
- *The program structure is well described from the individual perspective, but lack a school-level structure (e.g. special research programmes or themes, research seminars, international visiting professor lectures).*
- *Nursing would benefit from a clear research programme with a strategy, vision and steps of action. This will need investment."*

Strengths:

- *"Small numbers allow individual attention."*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

1.1 *"Nursing could benefit from stronger structure of PhD programme that would integrate students to the scientific society in stronger way than just with their own research team (supervisors)."*

In addition:

- *The program structure is well described from the individual perspective, but lack a school-level structure (e.g. special research programmes or themes, research seminars, international visiting professor lectures).*

- *The program is very much individual based and students work in close contact with their supervisors.*

Response/Action:

- We thank the EEC for the recommendation, and we would like to reiterate the fact that the outcomes of PhD theses in the PhD in Nursing programme, while strongly related to the research of the supervisor, bring not only new knowledge in their scientific fields but also benefit to the society at a large.
- The University of Nicosia has set as part of its vision and strategy to support the research of the faculty. Centrally:
 - The University runs “The Research Skills Development Programme (RSDP)” which is a series of webinars that aims to enhance our university’s research culture. The seminars are open to faculty and staff, researchers, as well as PhD students. The link to past events can be found in <https://www.unic.ac.cy/research-skills-development-programme/>
 - Information about research funding opportunities and participation in European and international consortia is also provided by the Research and Innovation Office at the University of Nicosia. Informative seminars/webinars are also offered to faculty.
 - Research time release is offered to faculty to dedicate time away from teaching in their research efforts
 - Internal Grants are given to faculty to attend conferences and to conduct research

Specific actions have been taken following the recommendation by the EEC to strengthen the PhD in Nursing programme:

- Based on the faculty research interests and background and taking into consideration the suggestions by the committee, the following multidisciplinary key themes have been decided:
 - Cancer care and Oncology
 - Nursing Education, Clinical Communication and Health Psychology
 - Digital care
 - Management of Chronic diseases
 - Public Health Care
 - Infectious diseases & epidemiology
- In order to support the above, the University has approved a position for a Director of Nursing Research (see attached description- Appendix 1). The

director within others will be responsible to coordinate and expand themes of research. More specifically will be responsible for: Providing leadership for research; Mentoring faculty in writing and submitting for publication and grant funding; Providing support to faculty, including pre- and post- grant award support and regulatory oversight; Gathering and reporting individual faculty and aggregate outcomes for scholarships to ensure compliance with internal and external regulatory and accrediting bodies. The Director will work in close contact with the Erasmus Office, the Research and Innovation Office (RIO) and the office of the Vice-Rector for Faculty and Research at the University of Nicosia, for expanding the network of universities for academic and research exchanges, for research funding opportunities locally and internationally, and for setting up training activities/workshops that will benefit the faculty not only in the Nursing programme but also in other disciplines. The vacancy is open- the link can be found here: <https://www.akadeus.com/announcement,a6862.html>

- The program has appointed 3 visiting professors. These academics will strengthen, support, and expand the research areas of the PhD programme, they will deliver seminars and lectures, bringing up-to-date knowledge and their experience to the students. Moreover, they will also guide and support the junior faculty in supervision and research activities. Furthermore, they will be invited to participate in the seminars of the Medical School. Their CVs and credentials can be found in Appendix 2
- Medical and nursing faculty will be cross-programme appointed to supervise PhD thesis.
- To further enhance the academic formation of the PhD students, the programme, in addition to the webinars organized by the University of Nicosia centrally, has planned a series of seminars that will be delivered in the academic year 2022-2023 such as Global Health & Research, Clinical Nursing Research, Innovation through Research and Evidence-Based Practice.
- A scientific committee and organizing committee have been set to organize an annual research conference in 2023, where academics, professionals and PhD students at UNIC and other universities can share and present their work.
The conference main topic is Global Emerging Issues.

2 Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Findings by the EEC:

- *The process of teaching and learning support students' individual and social learning.*
- *The University has well established systems for supporting students that have learning difficulties.*
- *The education could benefit from a structured PhD-school with seminars, visiting professors etc.*
- *Students are active participants and feel confident, which is good.*
- *The current classrooms are up to date and spacious.*
- *The students and teachers seemed to have very good relationships and teachers were ready to support students that needed extra help.*
- *Students can give feedback anonymously.*
- *Student evaluation is fair, appropriate, transparent and objective.*

Strengths:

- *Good supervision. Friendly and supportive environment. Good possibility to progress.*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

2.4 *“The education could benefit from structured PhD-school with seminars, visiting professors etc.”*

Response/Action:

- The University runs “The Research Skills Development Programme (RSDP)” which is a series of webinars that aims to enhance our university’s research culture. The seminars are open to faculty and staff, researchers, as well as PhD students. The link to past events can be found in <https://www.unic.ac.cy/research-skills-development-programme/>
- The program has appointed 3 visiting professors. (Appendix 2) These academics will strengthen, support, and expand the research areas of the PhD programme, they will deliver seminars and lectures, bringing up-to-date knowledge and their experience to the students. Moreover, they will also guide and support the junior faculty in supervision and research activities. Their CVs and credentials can be found in Appendix 2.



- To further enhance the academic formation of the PhD students, the programme, in addition to the webinars organized by the University of Nicosia centrally, has planned a series of seminars that will be delivered in the academic year 2022-2023.
- Visiting Professors and PhD students will be invited to participate in seminars of the Medical School and Nursing program.
- A scientific committee and organizing committee have been set to organize an annual research conference in 2023, where academics, professionals and PhD students at UNIC and other universities can share and present their work.
The conference main topic is Global Emerging Issues.

3 Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

Findings by the EEC:

- *This is a key area for future development at UNIC that requires a stronger thematic approach to research. We suggest that such themes would enhance research and teaching links and might also encourage faculty to conduct research in groups and publish more papers in relevant areas.*
- *A professor of nursing with a focus on research leadership (e.g. as Director of Nursing Research) could co-ordinate this initiative and encourage a stronger academic culture in nursing.*
- *The research themes could be used to teach about research, using actual examples, in the BSc and MSc programmes, and PhDs could certainly align with the research themes also.*
- *Without this change the teaching across BSc/MSc/PhD programmes will remain quite traditional in approach and the marketing of the programme will not stand out as unique.*
- *Given the established nature of the programme and faculty we suggest that this would be possible with some investment and a strategic vision that links nursing with the department's goals and with UNIC's ambitions as a whole."*

Strengths:

- *"Small numbers of students, supervision arrangements work well. Some progress from MSc to PhD."*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

3.2"Ensure more seminars are provided by faculty and external experts. Link PhD topics with research themes."

In addition:

- *"This is a key area for future development at UNIC that requires a stronger thematic approach to research. We suggest that such themes would enhance research and*

teaching links and might also encourage faculty to conduct research in groups and publish more papers in relevant areas.

- *A professor of nursing with a focus on research leadership (e.g. as Director of Nursing Research) could co-ordinate this initiative and encourage a stronger academic culture in nursing.*
- *The research themes could be used to teach about research, using actual examples, in the BSc and MSc programmes, and PhDs could certainly align with the research themes also. Without this change the teaching across BSc/MSc/PhD programmes will remain quite traditional in approach and the marketing of the programme will not stand out as unique.*
- *Given the established nature of the programme and faculty we suggest that this would be possible with some investment and a strategic vision that links nursing with the department's goals and with UNIC's ambitions as a whole."*

Response/Action:

- We have taken into account the recommendation of the EEC regarding the structuring of the PhD in Nursing Programme under themes, to enhance research and teaching links, conduct research in groups and publish papers in relevant areas.
This thematic approach will also lead to a horizontal restructuring of the Nursing programmes, which while retaining the core of the Nursing practice and science, will strengthen the academic profile of the programme, bring the programmes up-to-date and help in the formation of professionals able to face the current challenges in the area.
- The visiting professors to the Nursing programme, being internationally recognized in their fields for their academic and scientific merit, will strengthen, support, and expand the research areas of the PhD programme. They will supervise PhD thesis, develop research projects in cooperation with the faculty, support research grant applications, in addition to delivering seminars and lectures, bringing up-to-date knowledge and their experience to the students at all cycles. Their CVs and credentials can be found in the Appendix 2.
- Medical and nursing faculty will be cross-programme appointed to supervise PhD thesis.
- The University runs centrally "The Research Skills Development Programme (RSDP)" which is a series of webinars that aims to enhance our university's research culture. The seminars are open to faculty and staff, researchers, as well as PhD students. The link to past events can be found in <https://www.unic.ac.cy/research-skills-development-programme/>
- To further enhance the academic formation of the PhD students, the programme, in addition to the webinars organized by the University of Nicosia centrally, has planned a series of seminars that will be delivered in the academic year 2022-2023.

- A scientific committee and organizing committee have been set to organize an annual research conference in 2023, where academics, professionals and PhD students at UNIC and other universities can share and present their work.
- The University of Nicosia, having in mind the importance of health professionals (especially during these times of the pandemic), the necessity of providing expert training, knowledge and skills to face these new challenges, is committed to support the Nursing programmes. As such, the University of Nicosia has approved the budget for upgrading the laboratory infrastructure and for new positions that will help support the practical activities and the research activities and output of the faculty.



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

Findings:

- *“The admission processes for student admission are appropriate and clearly defined.*
- *The processes are transparent.*
- *There are clear regulations for student progression and students are aware of them.*
- *The regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *The recognition is in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention.*
- *The student certification is appropriate.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

No suggestions.

5 Learning resources and student support

(ESG 1.6)

Findings:

- *“The answers here relate to other sections of the report concerning UNIC’s decision about whether to invest in nursing or not.*
- *At present it does not feel that there are any problems with supporting students across any of the programmes, indeed they did comment on feeling like they were part of a family.*
- *This is highly commendable, and is easier to achieve when numbers are low, but should not detract from the need to modernise and strategise for growth in numbers of PhD students across disciplines within the Department.*
- *Recruitment information for all programmes, but especially for the PhD would benefit from a thematic approach and better information on the website.”*

Strengths:

- *“Good faculty/student relationships exist. Faculty are open to change but this will need leadership and a strategic approach to strengthen PhD and research links. This seemed to be a popular suggestion.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

5.2 *“Need to invest in research and opportunities (students and Faculty) to look outside of the immediate environment for new ideas. Market the programme better and make clear what is.”*

Response/Action:

- As mentioned in our response to point 3.2., the University of Nicosia, having in mind the importance of health professionals (especially during these times of the pandemic), the necessity of providing expert training, knowledge and skills to face these new challenges, is committed to supporting the Nursing programmes. As such, the University of Nicosia has approved the budget for upgrading the laboratory infrastructure and also for new positions that will help support the practical activities and the research activities and output of the faculty.
- We thank the helpful comments regarding our website and the information that it contains. We are in the process of updating the structure and content of the website.
- Moreover, with the implementation of the research thematic areas, the PhD programme in Nursing will become more competitive and attract students that will strengthen the research profile of the faculty, the programme and the University.

6 Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

Findings

- *“The recruitment of PhD students is not thematic and related to areas of strength in the department but instead seems rather ad-hoc.*
- *Numbers are small but satisfaction among students appears to be high.*
- *There are no concerns with the recruitment of students, but the marketing of this programme (and some others) was only available in Greek on the UNIC website. This limits the available market.”*

Strengths

- *“Good rapport seems to exist between supervisors and students. There were no major concerns voiced by the doctoral students and they were enthused about their studies.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

6.1 *“We suggest that having a number of research themes - that would link to areas of strength in the faculty and are aligned with the University’s priorities - would be a good ‘home’ for your PhD students. These themes could also accommodate MSc research projects (which may increase in number as a result) and provide some new undergraduate teaching opportunities.*

Response/Action:

- We thank the EEC for their suggestions on the establishment of thematic areas, strengthening the research profile, expanding the network, more research exposure for the students, which we thought to be extremely helpful and will be implemented.
- We have taken the necessary steps for this, starting with the position of the Director of Nursing Research and the appointment of visiting professors. The thematic area will be implemented, encompassing the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

6.2 *There is a need for more seminars on research, both face to face and using Zoom to connect with wider international research networks such as exists in oncology nursing.*

Response/Action:

- To further enhance the academic formation of the PhD students, the programme, in addition to the webinars organized by the University of Nicosia centrally, has planned a series of seminars that will be delivered in the academic year 2022-2023.

6.3 It would also be good to see stronger links with other universities generally and to establish more adjunct visiting Professors to join the research themes as well as to feed into the doctoral programme, and the nursing research profile at UNIC more generally.

Response/Action:

- The program has identified 3 visiting professors and we are in the process of approving them through the University boards. These academics will strengthen, support, and expand the research areas of the PhD programme, they will deliver seminars and lectures, bringing up-to-date knowledge and their experience to the students. Moreover, they will also guide and support the junior faculty in supervision and research activities. Their CVs and credentials can be found in Appendix 2.

6.4 Arranging a student conference once a year would also allow them to share their work and encourage peer-review. Making the website more welcoming to English speaking students might help with recruitment.”

Response/Action:

- As stated above, a scientific committee and organizing committee have been set to organize an annual research conference in 2023, where academics, professionals and PhD students at UNIC and other universities can share and present their work. The conference main topic is Global Emerging Issues.
- We are in the process of updating the structure and content of the website.



7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

N/A

B. Conclusions and final remarks



We would like to thank the members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and detailed work during the evaluation of the BSc programme in Nursing, Master of Science in Contemporary Nursing and PhD in Nursing on November 2-3, 2021.

The EEC noted that *“all three programs have a strong ground and well-established platform for future development.” All the comments regarding the strengths and recommendations were well received and the implementation of several suggestions is in process.*”

The EEC offered certain suggestions to strengthen the profile of Nursing at UNIC. Taking into serious consideration the suggestions the programmes Coordinators and the faculty members, as well as the Department of Life and Health Sciences of the University of Nicosia, have already taken immediate actions to adopt the EEC’s recommendations.

Concluding, we would like to thank once more the External Evaluation Committee for their valuable feedback and their evaluation of the PhD in Nursing Programme.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Philippos Pouyioutas	Professor, Rector	
Panayiotis Angelides	Professor, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs	
Kyriacos Felekkis	Professor, Acting Dean, School of Life and Health Sciences	
Christos Petrou	Assoc. Professor, Acting Head, Department of Health Sciences	
Zoe Roupa	Professor, Co-ordinator of Nursing Program (BSc & PhD)	

Date: Click to enter date



List of Apprentices

Appendix 1 - Academic Position in Nursing (Director of Nursing Research)

Appendix 2 - Visiting Professors CVs

