

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 3/11/2021

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Life and Health Sciences
- **Department/ Sector:** Life Sciences
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek: Διατροφή και Διαιτολογία, Ανθρώπου (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English: Nutrition and Dietetics (4 years, 240 ECTS, BSc,)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek and English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**N/A

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 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

A. Introduction

We would like to thank the members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and academic approach during the on-site evaluation of the programme and for producing a detailed and professionally written evaluation report. We highly appreciate the EEC's constructive comments and recommendations for further improving our programme. This evaluation indeed adds value to our programme taking into consideration the EEC's members' expertise in the subject and/or related areas.

Below you will find detailed responses to all recommendations 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

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The Nutrition and Dietetics programme has been found to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section.

The EEC has confirmed that *'the University of Nicosia generally follows all European Guidelines and Standards for Quality Assurance, the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, the Private Universities (Establishment, Operation and Control) Law 109(1) of 2005 and the KYSATS – Cyprus National Academic Recognition Information Centre - NARIC Law. The EEC has confirmed that the content of the overall courses is adequate and reaches the required academic level and it confirmed that the 'University of Nicosia maintains a student-centered learning environment that promotes and encourages student interaction and feedback throughout the curriculum design, evaluation and quality assurance of the programmes.'* It was stressed that when updating an existing course, several people from the university are involved to provide the best possible result. Regarding the academic part, several faculty members (instructor of the course, department faculty and head) participate in the design process using their expertise and specified standards set by the institution.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

1. The University shows pride in its strong internationalization policy with respect to relationships with HEI's as well as student recruitment
2. Quality assurance is an essential policy of the University of Nicosia and involves updating the level of teachers and regularly monitoring the level of learners.
3. The teaching personnel is of high quality regarding experience in education.
4. The infrastructure is adequate to allow students to progress in their study.
5. All information including ECTS and learning outcomes regarding the programme is publicly available on the internet.
6. All course syllabi are submitted to the course coordinators and the programme coordinator for feedback and self-assessment of the programme is also conducted via anonymous questionnaires

distributed to the students.

7. Internal Programme Evaluation Process with student representative allows for further enhancement of the programme.
8. The Pedagogical Support Unit and the e-learning PSU offer further supports to staff and students to ensure high quality standards are achieved. The Pedagogical Advisory Board also guides quality improvement communication structures between students and staff.
9. The programme has been designed with overall programme objectives being achieved with the scaffolding of learning across modules and years.
10. External expertise has been evident from staff's own experiences and learnings (studied overseas).
11. The course has a logical sequence. Module handbooks are detailed with learning outcomes, assessment criteria, reading materials clearly signposted.
12. Clearly outlined supports for students with a wide range of services available - counselling, academic.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

1. *Consider the appointment of an External Examiner or an external advisory committee with key stakeholder involvement and international perspectives. Whilst external expertise has been evident from staff's own experiences and learnings (studied overseas etc) it's important that this remains current.*

Response/Action: The Programme of Nutrition and Dietetics, in accordance with the University regulations, will encourage external examiners to engage more fully with explicit standards (including the National Framework of Qualifications, subject benchmark statements and professional standards, as well as local standards, such as grade descriptors and assessment criteria) and to participate in greater discussion regarding the meaning of these standards within a discipline and within the institution where they are an external examiner. Two of the faculty already acquired the title of Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) which demonstrates that your practice aligns with the Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education. *Need to consider the embedding of digital competencies and mapping or scaffolding student's learning to these competencies across the programme.*

Response/Action: The students are advised to take as an elective the following courses which entails some of theories of the digital competencies

<u>BADM-231</u>	Business Communications
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The programme will suggest to the Curriculum Committee to add as electives the followings:

<u>MIS-220</u>	Technologies for the Social Web
<u>MIS-256</u>	Web-based Applications Development

Some of the main objectives of the courses above are to:

- Understand the theories behind the Social Web and its components.

- Recognize and evaluate the latest Social Applications and the supportive technologies.
- Provide a comprehensive overview of the underlying Online Communities, their design and development.
- Explore the concept of developing Facebook Applications.
- Illustrate Usability - Best practices for user interface design following Nielsen's.
- Explore Business aspects of the Social Web.
- Preview the emerging Social Networks and Spaces.
- Apply the gained knowledge to design and implement a social web application.
- Provide a comprehensive introduction to web-based technologies.

Furthermore, the digital competencies will be reinforced in the following main core courses

<u>NUTR-280</u>	Nutritional Counseling Behavior
<u>NUTR-370G</u>	Communication Skills and Nutritional Counseling

2. *At next review consider the overlap between some modules – mapping exercise of learning outcomes needed. Ensure diversity in assessments and not to over assess students.*

Response/Action: The programme of Nutrition and Dietetics follows a spiral type of learning, a teaching method based on the premise that a student learns more about a subject each time the topic is reviewed or encountered. The idea is that each time a student encounters the topic, the student expands his/her knowledge or improves his/her skill level. Furthermore, in order to assure diversity in assessments based on learning outcomes we summarized and upgraded the mapping of the learning outcomes with the teaching/learning methods and assessment as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Intended Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes are referenced to the QAA Benchmark Statements for Health Care Programmes - Dietetics and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and relate to the typical student. A matrix is provided in **Appendix 1** which identifies where the programme learning outcomes are assessed in the constituent modules. It provides (i) an aid to academic staff in understanding how individual modules contribute to the programme aims (ii) a checklist for quality control purposes and (iii) a means to help students monitor their own learning, personal and professional development as the programme progresses.

Knowledge and understanding of:	Teaching/learning methods & strategies	Assessment
A1. behavioural sciences that aid understanding of the dynamics of health, illness and healthcare and the impact these factors can have on patients'/clients' response to and management of their health status and related treatment;	Acquisition of A1-6 is through a combination of lectures, small group tutorials, student lead small discussion groups, practical laboratory work, worksheets and clinical education. A feature of the programme is the integrated scenario-based approach, which enables students to understand the relevance of the material studied and that theory informs practice as well as practice informing theory. Inter-active learning in multi-professional groups is	Testing of knowledge and understanding through a combination of written examinations (A4-A6) and assessed in-course assessments (A1-A6), in the form of laboratory reports (A4, A5), essay assignments (A1-A3), scenario-based case studies (A1-A6) and presentations (A1, A3, A6). Practice-based assessment also incorporates the
A2. the ethical, legal, organisational and professional framework		

<p>within which dietitians operate;</p> <p>A3. biochemical sciences that act as a platform for problem-solving, recognising the abnormal from the normal;</p> <p>A4. clinical sciences that aid the understanding of pathophysiology and resulting clinical features of conditions usually encountered in dietetic practice that also underpin effective clinical reasoning and diet therapy;</p> <p>A5. nutritional sciences as applied to dietetic practice in relation to food analysis, food choice and appropriate modification of diet;</p> <p>A6. nutritional health promotion and education;</p>	<p>incorporated as appropriate into the programme.</p> <p>Throughout, the learner is facilitated to undertake independent study both to supplement and consolidate what is being taught / learnt and to broaden their individual knowledge and understanding of the subject. At level 4 there is more structured guidance, which decreases as students progress through the programme. StudyNet is fundamental in supporting students' learning and gives students access to a range of electronic resources and communication tools. See Programme-specific assessment regulations for further information. Additional support is available through the students' personal tutor, module lead or programme tutor.</p>	<p>assessment of knowledge and understanding.</p>
<p>Intellectual skills – able to:</p>	<p>Teaching/learning methods & strategies</p>	<p>Assessment</p>
<p>B1. demonstrate professional autonomy, adopting the ethical code of dietetic practice ;</p> <p>B2. understand professional accountability and work within the framework set out in the standards of conduct;</p> <p>B3. establish appropriate professional relationships within wider health care teams;</p> <p>B4. reflect critically on their performance and practice;</p> <p>B5. synthesise knowledge and evaluate research to support practice in the clinical setting;</p> <p>B6. demonstrate an understanding of contemporary health care provision in respect of dietetic practice</p>	<p>Intellectual skills, B1-6, are developed through throughout the programme by the methods and strategies outlined in section A, above. Analysis, problem solving and clinical reasoning skills are introduced through case-scenarios and are further developed through tutorial work, laboratory work and practice placements.</p> <p>Throughout, the learner is encouraged to further develop intellectual skills by independent study, which at level 4 is more structured and directed than at level 6. Students are introduced to reflective practice at level 4 and this is enhanced and supported as they progress through the programme with practice orientated reflection sessions at the end of each placement.</p>	<p>Learning outcomes B1-6 are assessed following the programme's philosophy of employing a variety of assessment tools. These include written and practical examinations, vivas, group seminars, reflective essays, analytical case studies, laboratory reports as well as self and peer assessment. Practice-based assessment also incorporates the assessment of B1-6.</p>
<p>Practical skills – able to:</p>	<p>Teaching/learning methods & strategies</p>	<p>Assessment</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C1. utilise an holistic approach to patient/client assessment; C2. show an awareness of individual social and cultural factors that may impact on the interaction between dietitian and client; C3. relate theory to practice using decision- making skills; C4. plan, implement and evaluate appropriate diet therapy for their clients; C5. keep accurate professional records; C6. demonstrate safe practice; C7. apply knowledge of behavioural sciences to support and motivate clients to change their behaviour; C8. evaluate dietetic interventions and practice; 	<p>Practical skills, C1-8, are developed throughout the programme by the methods and strategies outlines in section A.</p> <p>These are facilitated through scenario-based approach to learning and teaching, supported by practical laboratory sessions, small group workshops, tutorials, seminars and discussions. These skills (C1-8) are also developed, re-enforced and consolidated during periods of clinical education, together with opportunities for inter-professional learning.</p> <p>The timing of practice-based placements has been chosen purposefully to include a placement relatively early in the programme. The placement periods dovetail with periods of university-based study. This is in order to facilitate the integration of theory and practice, maintain student motivation and aid the development of reflective practitioners. Through alternating learning in this manner, practice informs theory and theory informs practice.</p>	<p>Practical skills, C1-8, are assessed through a combination of the following methods: analytical case studies, reflective writing, vivas, interactive practical examinations and through a criterion-referenced practice-based education assessment tool for each level of study.</p>
<p>Transferable skills - able to:</p>	<p>Teaching/learning methods & strategies</p>	<p>Assessment</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D1. communicate effectively with a range of audiences; D2. work as an effective team member; D3. demonstrate effective time management and self management skills including priority-setting; D4. demonstrate appropriate people management skills; D5. identify and access information utilising a range of resources; D6. demonstrate skills of analysis and enquiry; D7. initiate and complete projects/tasks; D8. learn effectively and independently in preparation for life-long learning. 	<p>Transferable skills, D1-8, are developed throughout the programme by the methods and strategies outlined in section A. Certain parts of the programme emphasises the development of one or more of these transferable skills through their inclusions into particular case-scenarios. Students carry out projects / tasks in small groups which are less complex at level 4 than level 6. Throughout, the student is encouraged to develop transferable skills by keeping a record of evidence, which is integrated into a portfolio of continuing professional development that is introduced at level 4 and will be used throughout their career as a dietitian.</p>	<p>Transferable skills are assessed through a range of written assignments, vivas, practical examinations / presentations and the practice-based education assessment tool.</p>

3. *Consider double marking of % of assessment or moderation*

Response/Action: Although, this is not something that is required by the University regulations, the programme is considering to gradually enforce the Second Marking procedure. The procedure involves the first marker- marking the assessment and producing feedback and then the assessment is passed to the moderator (second marker) who also looks at the assessment and the first marker's proposed marks and feedback. If they are in agreement about the mark and feedback, then moderation ends. If not, the first marker(s) and moderator would discuss the assessment and try to reach a consensus decision regarding the mark, using the same options. This as well as the independent 2nd marking have already been used when the students complaint of unfair marking.

4. *Look to ways to increase module and course student feedback – ie incentivize with vouchers or competition or allow time within class for completion.*

Response/Action: This is something that the University examines centrally. However, the Nutrition and Dietetics programme plan to try the following ways for student feedback:

- (a) Give surveys- Anonymous online surveys can be one of the good ways to gather students' perceptions of their professor and their own learning experiences.
- (b) Initiate a small group instructional feedback (SGIF) session- SGIF session is when a facilitator (often another faculty member) and a recorder visit the class while the tutor steps out, and it is often initiated as a mid-semester check-in so there's enough time to implement positive change for the remaining semester. The purpose of SGIF is for the facilitator to gather information from students about their learning experience in the course. Students can be placed in small groups and asked to free write and then discuss questions such as: "What about this course has been most helpful to your learning?"
- (c) Conduct a focus group- The discussion in focus groups is facilitated by the tutor. Focus groups could be initiated at any point in the semester. Students can form a group of four to five to discuss three questions amongst themselves such as 'How could this course be improved for next semester? What assignments should be kept? What assignments should be modified or deleted?' Then, a reporter from each group reports their feedback aloud and when there is a suggestion for improvement with the majority of the students consensus, then the changes are made.

The above are based on the following :

Diamond, Miriam Rosalyn. "The usefulness of structured mid-term feedback as a catalyst for change in higher education classes." *Active Learning in Higher Education* 5, no. 3 (2004): 217-231.

Mandouit, Luke. "Using student feedback to improve teaching." *Educational Action Research* 26, no. 5 (2018): 755-769.

5. *Ensure diversity of student representation on various committees and boards*

Response/Action: The students currently are represented in various committees and boards (programme meetings, department council, discipline committee etc.) Furthermore, the Nutrition and Dietetics Student belong to the Unic Student Nutrition/Dietetics Society where they elect their board. They are encouraged to be student members at the Cyprus Dietetic and Nutrition Association.

6. *At next accreditation provide the committee with findings from the internal review and actions implemented from this – how was feedback from students in particular actioned?*

Response/Action: The specific internal review was presented to the EEC including how the feedback was actioned. This will be continued, and it will be presented again to the next accreditation.

7. *Important to note in module handbook student endeavour hours expected for the ECTS allocation as well as face to face hours with lectures/tutorials/labs etc*

Response/Action: This appears in the student handbook, **Appendix 2.**

8. *No information regarding process of attaining placements, how placements are allocated, are students afforded equal opportunities within the placement structures, feedback from sites and feedback and evaluation from students – this would be helpful to ensure the placements are fit for purpose and meet programme objectives and assigned competencies or standards for students to practice as nutritionists/dietitians*

Response/Action: This information is included in the placement pack. The placement is allocated by the coordinator of the placement and all students are rotated equally to all sites (hospital, food industry, pharmaceutical industry, dietitians private offices, schools, long care facilities, research centers etc). The assessment is done by the coordinator, the students assess the sites and the educators assess the students. The placement pack is provided in **Appendix 3.**

9. *For the 20% of students that do not undertake further postgraduate studies important to report the career path of these graduates*

Response/Action: According to the Cyprus law for the Registration of Dietitians (N31(i)96) all the graduates of the BSc Nutrition and Dietetics of the University of Nicosia can register/be licensed as dietitians and nutritionists/dietitians at the Cyprus Dietetic and Nutrition Association therefore they can practice nutrition/dietetics in private practice, they can act as consultants in the food industry and pharmaceutical industry for nutritional supplements and also work at research centers and/or schools. Their duties can include providing one to one consultation to people or groups of people on matters of nutrition and dietetics, design menus for facilities, perform nutritional analysis and develop food labels for companies etc.

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

The Nutrition and Dietetics programme has been found to be fully compliant in all four criteria of this section.

The EEC has confirmed that *'the process of teaching and learning is in line with the European standards and all procedures discussed at the onsite meetings are typical for the university practice in the EU, as it is student-orientated programme aiming always at cultivating and developing critical thinking, teamwork, knowledge building, technological education and basic skills that students must have to adapt to modern challenges in their chosen careers.'* It was noted that the Nutrition and Dietetics programme uses modern and student-centred ways of teaching and learning and that most teaching personnel has a long experience in this direction. The Practical training was considered in line with the recommendations of EFAD (European Academic and Practitioner Standards for Dietetics, June 2005), the placement part of the above course (254 hours placement) takes place both in a clinical and a non-clinical setting. Specifically, it includes observation in Food Production

Companies, in Primary Health Care (Municipal Clinics, Health Centres, public and private hospitals and clinics, rehabilitation centres), gyms, preschool education (Kindergartens) and primary and secondary education. Further, students are taught in small groups and are continually monitored and are assessed by various accepted methods. The EEC commented that student assessment is both formative and informative/summative, while students are provided with feedback both officially and unofficially on a regular basis.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- 1. The whole approach of teaching, assessing and practical training of students followed in this specific BSc programme, gives students a broad perspective of Dietetics and Nutrition.*
- 2. Students are educated in both the theoretical and the practical aspects of Nutrition and Dietetics. Up-to-date student-centered methods are used in teaching.*
- 3. Teaching is done in relatively small groups allowing the establishment of a relationship of trust and mutual respect among teachers and students as well as the close monitoring of student progress. Students report being listened to and given enough personal attention.*
- 4. Student assessment methods are in place and well aligned with the learning objectives of the programme.*
- 5. A considerable part of the education is devoted to the development of lab and research. This is evidenced by the inclusion of the final projects in the fourth year as well as other assignments and coursework throughout the four-year course.*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. Students are educated in various competencies including knowledge, lab skills, academic writing and presenting, critical thinking and professional behaviour (giving and accepting feedback). It seems that progress is monitored mainly by the teachers in close contact with the students.

Recommendation: it would be advisable to install a system through which the progress on various competencies, particularly those related to the profession of dietetics, are covered and examined during the course of the studies. Also, although digital competencies are developed and utilised through the Moodle platform, social media, youtube and Webex, it is recommended that there is a need for them to collaborate even more.

Response/Action: The recommendation will be taken into consideration. The progress on the competencies *related to the profession of dietetics are monitored by the coordinators*. The coordinators have meetings to discuss student progress but also the progress is monitored by the teachers in close contact. In addition, there is a matrix in place that allows for the monitoring of expected competencies in our program (**Appendix1**). Using this matrix, competencies are evaluated in the subsequent courses.

- 2. Presently all assurance of teaching and assessment quality lies within the lecturers and the common practice is that the course organisers use each other's advice as the main source of external support and control.*

Recommendation: It might be advised to institute more formal methods of quality assurance and approval through for example, larger bodies, such as exam and curricular boards comprised of local faculty, as well as external examiners from other universities in Cyprus and the EU.

Response/Action: The University assessment system at the University of Nicosia but also in Cyprus in general does not utilize external evaluators. Having said that, we do use internal evaluators for our programme.

Specifically, the University is subject to Internal Quality Assurance carried out by the University Internal Quality Assurance Committee (UIQAC), the composition, processes and responsibilities of which, were recently updated to reflect the newest version of the European Standards and Guidelines of 2015 (ESG 2015). The UIQAC through its subcommittees, assures quality at an institutional, departmental and programme level. The University of Nicosia Internal Quality Assurance Committee (UIQAC) comprises of the following members:

- The Vice Rector for Academic Affairs: Chair (1)
- One TRF representative from each School holding the rank of at least Assistant Professor (6)
- One faculty member holding the rank of at least Assistant Professor, who is actively involved in the delivery of Distance Learning programmes/courses (1)
- One staff representative – appointed by the chair (1)
- The Head of Quality Assurance of the Medical School of the University (1)
- Two student representatives (one 1st Cycle student and one 2nd Cycle student) (2).

Further, the Departmental Internal Quality Assurance Committee ensures the QA at programme level. The Departmental QA committee is composed of:

- Head or Associate Head of the Department
- One faculty member, preferably with experience in quality assurance processes
- One student representative (1st Cycle) in the 3rd year of studies.

Notably, students as well as external experts (from academia and industry) support the Internal Program Evaluation Process (IPEP) (delivered in initial application) described above.

3. *The officially requested feedback from the students to the University has a low response rate (approx. 10-15%).*

Recommendation: Part of the time of regular teaching activities should be dedicated for registering feedback by the students. This will improve the response.

Response/Action: We agree, and we will try to increase the response rate. To that end, we have added a new feature on the portal and students cannot proceed if they do not answer the questionnaire.

4. *Although students do a substantial number of lab and placement hours, further strengthening of laboratory practice is recommended as many courses as possible in the Programme assume familiarity with lab equipment and modern lab methods, and placement principles.*

Response/Action: Most courses have hands on experience and demonstrations and as such we believe that our students have sufficient laboratory and placement exposure.

5. *Most of the delivery of the course teaching and assessment depends on the lecturers who are also course organisers. They have most of the responsibility for material selection, ensuring quality, resolving overlaps and performing all student assessment. The typical teaching load is 12-15 hours per week, which leaves little time for research and postgraduate supervision.*

Recommendation: Focus on balancing the teaching-load of individual staff.

Response/Action: The University offers motives and support to promote research. This includes a research time-release scheme that faculty may apply for. Specifically, the teaching load for professors is 6 hours per week (5 professors) whilst all other faculty usually get 6 hours time-release bringing their load down to 9 hours per week (4 Associate, 5 Assistant and 1 lecturer).

6. *Regarding assessment, at next review please provide sample assessment scripts across grades, and feedback provided against developed rubrics for transparency purposes. It would be beneficial to see an assessment map for the different semesters to ensure diversity amongst assessment types and to ensure minimal overlap. It would also provide the EEC with an idea of student assessment workload.*

Response/Action: As mentioned before and presented in Table 1, the programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes are referenced to the QAA Benchmark Statements for Health Care Programmes - Dietetics and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and relate to the typical student. A matrix is provided in **Appendix 1** which identifies where the programme learning outcomes are assessed in the constituent modules. It provides (i) an aid to academic staff in understanding how individual modules contribute to the programme aims (ii) a checklist for quality control purposes and (iii) a means to help students monitor their own learning, personal and professional development as the programme progresses. Upon the following review everything requested will be delivered.

7. *Thesis projects are given to the individual students based on their total academic performance. However, some students might be talented in the laboratory and the research field or/and in specific courses but not have the highest grade among all the students. Therefore, they might lose the opportunity to have an experimental thesis project and work in a laboratory, which may affect their further studies since they will not have the required experience to proceed to a research Master's or PhD degree. An experimental research project will prepare them better for their future studies and for their career - if they are interested in a career in research.*

Recommendation: An alternative way could be to give the thesis projects to the students, based on their academic performance on the specific subjects, which are related to the thesis project they are interested in. Moreover, for the experimental thesis project, it might be a good idea to select the students based on their performance in the laboratory classes, too. If resources allow, an even better solution would be to offer experimental laboratory projects (Nutrition assessment, NCP-nutrition care process, food analysis etc.) to all interested students.

Response/Action Although one of the criteria for the allocation of final projects is the student's performance, this is a good suggestion. To facilitate the process of project selection our faculty submit a form to the course lead with project details. We have adapted this form to include the methodology (**Appendix 4**). The supervisor may now include the courses where the students was taught the technique(s) necessary for the project and performance on the specific courses will be taken into consideration as well. The student form has also been adapted to include the grades of required courses. The assessment of the final projects has predetermined criteria appeared in **Appendix 5**. These are part of NUTR 495 (Final Year Project). We prefer that we have a variety of projects. This is due to the fact that as nutrition and dietetics are advancing there is a lot of work in a non-lab-based format.

8. *The curriculum offers sufficient courses of Nutrition and Dietetics, and it is in compliance with the Cypriot law for Dietetics (N31/(i)96).*

Recommendation: Incorporate placement hours in other courses offered in previous years and not offer all placement hours in year four. Also, incorporate more nutrition placement hours.

Response/Action Currently, placements hours through observation are offered throughout the 4 years

curriculum in the courses below:

FDSC-260 G	Food Science & Management Principles & Lab
FDSC-316 G	Food Service Systems Management + Lab
NUTR-360 G	Experimental Foods & Lab
NUTR-370 G	Communication Skills and Nutritional Counseling
NUTR-465 G	Food, Culture and Nutrition

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The Nutrition and Dietetics programme has found to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section.

The EEC commented that *'the recruitment of teaching personnel follows standard procedures shown to be effective'* whilst the ratio of FT to PT faculty is at an acceptable level. The EEC further noted that the ratio of teachers/students is kept low, which is very good and allows high quality monitoring of student progression. Notably, the teaching staff on the Programme generally meets all the requirements and standards for HEIs in EU. All teaching personnel has research experience and some of them are involved in international projects. The minimal involvement in research is by posting and executing a student research project for 4th year students.

'There is a good number of members of academic staff to support the teaching and research activities of undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research students. The academic staff holds appropriate to the discipline academic degrees, and research degrees at PhD level. Two members of the staff are fellows of the higher education academy in the UK but others seem to be lacking formal training and certification in academic practice, teaching and learning. The estimated number ratio between students to academic is appropriate, ensuring a high quality programme of training is delivered to students and staff has time to dedicate on professional development.

Currently the highest-ranking academics are two associate professors and a full professor who is also affiliated with another University in Greece. There are opportunities for interdisciplinary interaction with other Departments and Units within the University and the existence of a Medical School is considered an advantage. The process of staff appointment is not clear but the committee would expect this to follow governmental policies and the principles of equality and diversity. Teaching staff are adequately qualified to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning experience. It was unclear from the documentation on how academic staff is engaging in continuous professional, teaching and research training and development. Promotion criteria were not described but again the EEC would expect this to follow governmental and internal policies or promotion and reward. Members of academic staff carry international experience from major research active Universities in Europe. This is important as it offers to the Department and competitive international profile. The research activities of the members of staff are good but research outputs could have been much better. There was a lack of specialist technical staff particularly with the run of practical sessions and student support during laboratory dissertations.'

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Major strengths of the teaching staff include

1. Discipline appropriate academic qualifications, professional registration and ongoing engagement to research

2. Good staff to student ratio ensuring optimal conditions for academic learning and teaching are in place
3. Research and teaching interests cover a broad range of disciplines spanning from Public Health Nutrition to Clinical Nutrition and Nutritional Sciences
4. Some members of staff have academic qualifications in high education teaching and learning
5. There is dedicated staff to student advising and support with well-structured procedures

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- 1) *There is a need for members of academic staff to formally log and keep records of continuous professional development*

Response/Action

The University of Nicosia offers various CPD opportunities which requires the log and record of the CPE's :

1. Research Skills Development Programme
 2. FHEA certifications (2 members of the faculty)
 3. Policy for the reimbursement of faculty for their professional memberships in professional associations. This allows the faculty to keep up to date with professional developments, attend conferences and interact with other peers thus enhancing continued professional development.
 4. Policy for reimbursement of faculty for attending and presenting at professional, scientific conferences. This allows the faculty to engage in continued professional development.
 5. The CPD is presented and log in the Annual Faculty Self Assessment
 6. All the clinical dietitians(RD) faculty members are required by their internal affiliated bodies (HCPC, CDR) and the local Cyprus Registration Board for Food Scientists, Technologists and Dietitians to log their CPE's in order to retained their registration.
 7. UNic faculty uses PURE - a database in which a faculty can include all the above items
- 2) *The department seems to lack of technical support staff in laboratory and it was unclear whether there are post-doctoral researchers to help with research teaching activities, including co-supervision of BSc students*

Response/Action Actually, there are 5 Full Time Laboratory Officers which belongs to the Laboratory Support Unit that serves the needs of the School. who oversees the food and Nutrition Lab, Nutrition Assessment lab, Biology Labs, Physical Performance labs. Moreover, we utilize PhD students with laboratory and teaching assistance duties.

- 3) *The department may want to leverage existing opportunities to engage more with visiting professors from other Universities across Europe and elsewhere*

Response/Action: The suggestion is accepted and we will implement this.

- 4) *There is need for high calibre research and research outputs. Consideration of teaching and*

supervision workloads and the impact this has on research metrics.

Response/Action: UNic offers motives and support to encourage research such as research time release. Further, we implement a research recognition policy where faculty are rewarded for research achievements. As mentioned above, most faculty apply and obtain research time release (6 hours per Semester). In fact, Professors only teach 6 hours per semester while the rest of the faculty teach 9 hours.

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

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The Nutrition and Dietetics Programme has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section.

The EEC commented on the fact that *the University of Nicosia has a clear and appropriate regulation regarding admission of students and this information is explained in the application and available on the internet.* Further, the EEC commented on the support provided to students in general and international students in particular in regard to accommodation as well academic support via the Departments of Academic Affairs and Academic Advising. A programme for student advice and support is in place, supporting students with housing, organizing social activities and providing career advice. It is stated that progress is monitored by the teaching staff and feedback is provided throughout the semester. Students follow a clear and concise schedule, which also allows for electives and, if required, personal adjustments. All courses are well described, including aim and content, learning outcomes, schedule and assignments. There is also the option for exchange with other institutions of higher education abroad. Candidates are qualified for applying to MSc programmes in Europe, the USA and other parts of the world. In case students have acquired credits in other places or programmes, these can be recognized. Credits may also be transferred from one programme to another. Candidates are awarded with a degree and are recognized as 'dietitian' in Cyprus. The material provided a copy of the degree, but lacked the diploma supplement, thus it is not possible to evaluate whether this is appropriate.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

1. All procedures and courses are well described.
2. The entry criteria were well described
3. It is acknowledged that students should have had courses in biology and chemistry at high school before entering the programme, and it is advised that exceptions to this rule are only made for serious reasons.
4. The study programme appears as a well-developed and reasoned programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

1. *The material could contain the degree and a supplement detailing the course structure and brief curriculum. Student progression could have been described in more detail – how many students fulfil the study in 8 semesters, how many drop-out, and how many achieve the bachelor degree in the end. It would have been interesting to see the number and areas of outgoing and incoming students with international exchange programs.*

Response/Action: Currently, the number of students allows for close monitoring from the Coordinator and the Head of Department. Furthermore, students also have a faculty member as their advisor whom they can meet and discuss their options before registration. As the EEC also noted, there is an already established process, by which the Academic Advisors identify at the end of the semester all low-performing students (i.e., students with GPA less than 2.0). These students are then contacted by the Academic Advisor assigned to them and are offered extra help and tutoring hours by the University's Student Success Center. Currently, we are trying to decentralize the process by working in close contact with Academic Advisors (this role is undertaken by the Programme Coordinator).

Furtherore, the student dropout percentage of Nutrition and Dietetics programme of study is approximately 13% (due to pregnancy, illness, low grades) and the 87% of the students complete their studies . The rate of exchange students (eg ERASMUS) is close to 12%.

Nutrition and Dietetics (4 Years, BSc)

Dropout Average*:	13%
Graduation Average*:	87%
Average Duration of Studies Based on 2020-2021 Graduation Reports	5 Years (10 Semesters)

Note: Students are allowed to study on a full time and part time basis thus to calculate the avg graduation/dropout rate, data from cohorts in 2013 and onwards were used as to provide for the extended period of part time study.

Note: As per UNIC's regulations, students can complete a 4-year bachelor's degree within 9 years thus for calculating the dropout percentage, past semesters were taken into consideration, excluding students who study part-time, deferred their studies and plan to continue later on.

2. *The form of assignment for the individual courses could have been described in more detail.*

Response/Action: Based on the University of Nicosia Regulations all courses are described to students with a syllabus and a very analytical course outline. Separate instructions for assignments of the students are provided in the online platform (Moodle) and explained to students. Each course is assessed in three ways, for example Midterm exam, Assignment, and a Final Exam. As described above they are different types of assignment summarized in Table 1 (above). The types of assignment used include Essays, Reports, Literature reviews, Annotated bibliographies, Reflective tasks, Case Studies, Group Work. Group/Individual presentation skills are instructed in all courses. The type of exams used in Nutrition and Dietetics programme are: Multiple choice exams, Problem or case-based exams, Oral exams, Open-book and take-home exams, and Essay exams. The type of exam depends on the academic level of the student, course topic, special needs of the student and various emergency circumstances (e.g. Covid--19)

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The Nutrition and Dietetics Programme has been found to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section.

The University of Nicosia appears to have an excellent environment to support teaching and learning activities as well as student advisory and support facilities. There is a good number of classrooms for large size plenary presentations but also purpose-built rooms for smaller group teaching. There is a library with a broad collection of academic literature and students have access to e-journals and other resources. From the resources shared with the EEC there are cluster rooms and free internet access for registered students. It appears to exist adequate equipment and specialist laboratory space for practical training in energy balance studies, body composition, food preparation and science, biomedical and biological sciences. However, the EEC has not seen photos or videos of such facilities and how accessible these are for students. The equipment detailed in the programme documentation aligns with the needs of a BSc programme in nutrition and dietetics. All these ensure students are provided with the support they require to achieve their learning objectives. The number of students admitted to the programme is modest so the EEC cannot foresee major issues with resource availability, particularly if numbers increase, and should this be the case e-learning opportunities may help overcome such problems. There are human support resources available and there is a student advising and support facility where students can refer to receive a broad range of services. These span from support for students with disabilities to teaching and learning support for the slow learner. It is customary in academic institutions student to have the opportunity to refer to members of staff as a first line contact for matters around learning and pastoral care. The staff ensured that this was indeed the case, but the EEC would like to see some formal policy about tutors impeded the programme's information documentation. Students were positive of the environment and support they have been receiving. It might be good for the academic staff to collect formal feedback on these aspects on regular intervals and use this to improve the study curriculum, resources and facilities.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

1. Excellent environment to support teaching and learning as well as student advisory and support facilities
2. There is a good number of classrooms for large size plenary presentations but also purpose-built rooms for smaller group teaching.
3. There is a library with a broad collection of academic literature and students have access to e-journals.
4. There are cluster rooms and free internet access.
5. Adequate equipment and specialist laboratory space are in place for practical training
6. The equipment detailed in the programme documentation aligns with the needs of a BSc programme in nutrition and dietetics.
7. The number of students admitted to the programme is modest so the EEC cannot foresee major issues with resource availability if number increase
8. There are human support resources available and there is a student advising and support facility where students can refer to receive a broad range of advisory services and support.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

1. *It is customary in international academic institutions students to have the opportunity to refer to members of staff as a first line contact for matters around learning and pastoral care. The staff ensured that this practice was indeed the case but the EEC would recommend staff to formulate appropriate policies around tutoring and impend them in the programme's information documentation.*

Response/Action: One of the strengths of our programme is the support the students get from the faculty directly. In addition to the academic support there is also administrative support as for each Department/Programme a dedicated advisor facilitates the process of advising. Currently, we offer student tutoring services to the students as well. We welcome the suggestion, and we are planning to make it more vivid in the programme.

2. *It might be good for the academic staff to collect formal anonymous feedback, on regular intervals, and use this to review study curriculum, resources and facilities provision.*

Response/Action: We welcome the recommendation, and it will be taken into consideration for implementation

6.Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

N/A (provided in different report)

7. Eligibility (Joint programme)

(ALL ESG)

N/A



B. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

We thank the EEC for recommending accreditation of the Nutrition and Dietetic programme. The EEC noted, 'We commend the staff on the programme developed and in progress and on the quality assurance mechanisms in place and the student supports provided. In meeting the students, it is clear that they are well looked after and that there is a healthy student staff relationship. We feel the course meets the programme intended learning outcomes across years and semesters and prepares graduates for the working market in entry level nutrition and dietetic positions.' All the comments regarding the strengths and recommendations were well received and the implementation of several suggestions are in process. The comments regarding the Cyprus Law regarding Dietetics/Nutrition are conveyed to and considered by the appropriate bodies (Cyprus Registration Board for Food Scientists, Technologists and Dietitians and the Cyprus Association of Nutrition and Dietetics). We are very proud that our graduates fulfill the requirements and recognized as RD by HCPC and CDR or dietitians by DOATAP and working abroad successfully.

Concluding, as demonstrated in the report above, the program Coordinators and the faculty members of the Department of Life and Health Sciences of the University of Nicosia involved in developing and implementing the BSc in Nutrition and Dietetics, having thoroughly considered the EEC's constructive feedback have taken immediate action to adopt the EEC's recommendations.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	
Dr Eleni Andreou	Acting Head, Department of Life Sciences, Co-Coordinator of Nutrition and Dietetics	
Dr Elena Philippou	Coordinator of Nutrition and Dietetics	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: 3/11/2021