



Doc. 300.1.2

# Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 19 March 2021

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** School of Business
- **Department:** Department of Management
- **Programme of study**  
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

## Programme 3

### **In Greek:**

Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων ( 3 Έτη, 180 ECTS,  
Διδακτορικό)

### **In English:**

Business Administration ( 3 Years, 180 ECTS, Doctor  
of Philosophy)

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



**The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].**

## A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
  - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
  - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
  - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.1.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*



## Introduction and overall assessment

We refer to the report of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the evaluation-accreditation of the program of study 'PhD in Business Administration' (henceforth PhD program), which was prepared following a virtual visit at the University of Nicosia by the members of the EEC on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

On behalf of all those involved with the PhD program, we would like to thank the EEC members for their insightful questions and comments during the evaluation of the program and their recommendations. We would further also like to extend our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach within which this evaluation was conducted.

The EEC report received presents an overall positive evaluation of our program, scoring high in areas under examination and with comments mainly highlighting our programs' strengths. The members of the EEC made several positive comments and also offered constructive and insightful recommendations for improvement, which we sincerely appreciate as we consider the EEC members' expertise will indeed enable us to enhance our program even further. All comments have been considered and where the EEC has provided feedback for areas of improvement we have, in this report, addressed them by providing further information and possible actions.

We hope that our report will be well received and look forward to your positive evaluation of our PhD program.

## 1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

### Findings

“The Department appears to follow the university regulations that exist in relation to quality assurance expectations and based on the written reports and our virtual visit these appear to be largely in line with what one would expect for the programmes of study. There appears to be a strong desire by the leadership and faculty on a collective basis to work together on having high quality programmes being offered to students. In addition, other key stakeholders have involvement in quality assurance including students and external industry representation. There are overall programme objectives in place for all programmes, along with associated learning outcomes at both the programme and module levels though there is scope for reviewing these in context of being able to assure/measure student achievement of these. Student progression and success appeared to be very positive across the programmes under consideration”

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section.

### Strengths

“Programmes follow the university regulations on quality assurance processes. Pass rates appear to be very strong which is unsurprising given the exceptional level of support offered by staff. Modules within the programme appear to be largely kept current and updated regularly”

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their identification and appreciation of the strengths of our program presented under this section.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

### UNIC Response / Action:

In this section, no areas of improvement have been identified by the EEC for the PhD program, and hence there is no further information to provide nor further actions to state.

## 2. Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3)

### Findings

“The support offered to students by teaching staff is exceptional. It was very evident from site visit meetings that there is a passionate and engaged teaching team where the interest of students are both centre and above all else”

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section.

### Strengths

“Programmes offer distance and in person options so there are different modes of delivery open and students were positive towards this. The vast majority of module outlines appeared to be current and up-to-date in terms of key reading materials and content. There is a very strong mutual respect evident between faculty and students. Some good use of modern teaching methods across programmes.”

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their identification and appreciation of the strengths of our program presented under this section.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Practical training, Student Assessment

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section. Two areas which the EEC considers as possible room for further improvement includes Practical Training and Student Assessment, for which we are addressing and providing additional information below:

#### Practical Training:

- All new PhD students follow an intensive course (PhD803 - Research Philosophy, Methodology and Method) at the beginning of their program. Furthermore, during the program each supervisor is responsible to identify any training needs their student(s) may have and according to these needs, relevant training (online or on-grounds, either within the university or in cooperation with other universities) is offered. Examples of training provided to students are Qualitative methods (advanced Nvivo) and Quantitative Methods (advanced Statistical Analysis). Moreover, a series of seminars (see Appendix for Research Skills Development Programme) are organised and held each year by the Office of the Vice Rector of Research, which students may attend to further enrich their training needs. These include (but not limited to): Introduction to Refworks, Systematic Literature Review Methodology, Ethics in Research and Publishing, Publishing – Why, Where and How).
- The University is currently investigating the possibility of acquiring a university membership of VITAE, the global leader in supporting the professional development of researchers, to assist further in the identification of training needs, and ultimately provision of relevant training.
- During their PhD studies, students are encouraged to participate at PhD Consortia, workshops, access specialised, research-oriented, online courses (e.g. SAGE Publishing) and various other forms of academic development that may seem appropriate for each individual case.

### Student assessment:

- Progress is reviewed annually in September by the Department Postgraduate Programmes Committee (hereinafter DPPC). This Committee reviews the progress of all research students in the Department, and monitors the progress and quality of training offered to the student. The DPPC's report will base its decision on:
  1. the written reports submitted by the Supervisory Teams, including the reports of the student and Main Supervisor (DSO/4 – Doctoral Degree Student Supervision Record Sheet, DSO/5 – Joint Annual Review and DPPC's Progress Report)
  2. the completion of required work by the student, which will be received, approved and notified by the Supervisory Team (the Annual Report, the timetable, the Thesis plan)
  3. an oral presentation of work in progress (if needed)
  4. in the case of students who are undergoing a training programme, on the reports of progress made on the various components of the programme
  5. the Final Research Proposal as approved by the supervisory team
  6. whether the student has reached a satisfactory level for the thesis submission

The DPPC's decision may be based on one of the following four options:

- a. the student be allowed to proceed,
- b. the student's work (so far completed) is subject to a further review at a specified date if appropriate
- c. the student's studies be discontinued
- d. a decision may be deferred until a later meeting, at which time the student will be requested to provide further evidence of progress, as specified by the DPPC

### 3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

#### Findings

“The documentation and meetings demonstrated a high quality and committed teaching staff. The vast majority are PhD qualified with most being research active. It was somewhat surprising that there is no clear allocation for the supervision of the PhD researchers. Positively, in spite of what appears to be very substantial workloads, improvements in the quality of research output have been evident.”

#### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section.

#### Strengths

“A highly committed teaching staff was clearly evident from multi-stakeholder meetings. We commend the strong team-based approach that came across during the site visit. Well qualified teaching staff. Year on year improvements in faculty research outputs evident. The teaching reduction scheme is a welcome support for research.”

#### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their identification and appreciation of the strengths of our program presented under this section.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

“The capacity to provide PhD supervision also needs some consideration given staffing numbers and workload.”

#### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section. One area which the EEC considers as possible room for further improvement includes Teaching staff number and status, for which we are addressing and providing additional information below:

#### Teaching staff number and status:

- According to the University Regulations, each PhD student is allocated a supervisory team. The Supervisory Team is a three-member committee appointed by the DPPC. The DPPC, in consultation with the student, first appoints the student’s Main Supervisor, hereafter referred to as the Main Supervisor, and then the other two supervisors following the recommendation of the Main Supervisor. The committee is chaired by the Main Supervisor. The Main Supervisor and at least one other member of the committee are usually faculty members of the Department or School. The other member of the committee may be a faculty member from another Department or another University/Research Institute. A Main Supervisor cannot supervise at any time more than five (5) students. At least one member of the Supervisory Team must have: 1) the rank of Professor or Associate Professor and 2) Doctoral Degree Completion. Any member of the team without supervisory experience must undergo a training workshop on Doctoral Degree supervision. Moreover, no member of the Supervisory team should have a close personal relationship with the student. Hence, with these arrangements PhD supervision is shared by faculty members in order to avoid considerable workload for supervision but also to ensure the PhD candidate receives feedback and guidance from a three-member supervisory team.



- Moreover, currently there is one compulsory Module which needs to be completed by all PhD students, the PhD803 Research Philosophy, Methodology and Methods, and is offered within the first few months of student registration. This is co-taught by two experienced Professors, and the course is part of their yearly workload.

#### 4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

##### **Findings**

“The teaching history of the institution seems to have secured very detailed regulations for student entry and recruitment. All the information is well documented and accessible to all interested parties. The various programmes seem to have a focus on delivering content that is relevant to practice and there is an interest for international co-operations with other institutions and practitioner bodies that can provide accreditations.”

##### **UNIC Response / Action:**

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section.

##### **Strengths**

“Very detailed regulations that are well articulated. Competent systems that capture student performance.”

##### **UNIC Response / Action:**

We would like to thank the EEC for their identification and appreciation of the strengths of our program presented under this section.

##### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

##### **UNIC Response / Action:**

In this section, no areas of improvement have been identified by the EEC for the PhD program, and hence there is no further information to provide nor further actions to state.

## 5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

### Findings

“The support to the students as a process has been following the practices that the institution is used to rely on from its early days and is very centralised. There is a group of administrators that deal with course management and other groups of support and counselling staff that all work in a unit in the University centre. The teaching staff is providing a lot of feedback to the students. There is an ongoing and increasing engagement with learning methods that utilise development in technology.”

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section.

### Strengths

“The physical evidence we were shown seemed of high standards and quality in terms of buildings, library and equipment. The University and its staff seem to be looking for the development of the courses and the teaching methods constantly and considering ways that these changes will improve the delivery of the courses and the student experience.”

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their identification and appreciation of the strengths of our program presented under this section.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Human support resources.

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section. One area which the EEC considers as possible room for further improvement includes Human support resources, for which we are addressing and providing additional information below:

#### Human support resources:

- Regarding the PhD program, human support resources include - Recruitment Unit responsible for recruitments and applications of PhD students, MBA office responsible for registrations, PhD assistant to the Doctoral Coordinator, Finance department responsible for collection of fees, and the Office of the Vice Rector of Faculty and Research responsible for overall monitoring of PhD students and organising training programs both for PhD students and supervisors.



**6. Additional for distance learning programmes**  
(ALL ESG)

**N/A**

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

### Findings

“There is a clear commitment to the PhD programme. The department attracts applicants from many different countries. There are clear regulations, training that is specially developed for the PhD researchers and specific processes related to the PhD supervision process. During the programme each PhD researcher works with three supervisors. The programme has a commitment to the production of academic work that is presented to academic conferences and could be publishable in international journals. The graduates of the PhD programme pursue various careers, some join academia in various countries and others go to the industry.”

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section.

### Strengths

“There is some formal training for the PhD researchers, primarily when they join the programme. There is a seminar programme associated with the programme.”

### UNIC Response / Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for their identification and appreciation of the strengths of our program presented under this section.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. “Consider whether the selection procedure is overcomplicated for the size of the University.”
2. “There is no dedicated financial support for PhD researcher’s conference attendance.”
3. “There is no financial support for additional specific training that the researchers might need at later stages of their studies.”
4. “There are very few external speakers in the PhD seminars. This may be worth considering addressing.”
5. “In the PhD seminars that were delivered in the previous academic year and were made available, there was very little training on specific research skills.”
6. “The PhD programme seems very big for the size of the faculty.”
7. “There is no work allocation for PhD supervision.”
8. “There is no internal assessment on the progress of the PhD researchers that involves other academics outside their supervisory team.”
9. “There is no formal consideration of ensuring that the PhD students have a chance to gain insights into pedagogical methods and teaching experience, which would be a major advantage for those who wish to pursue an academic career afterwards.”

### **UNIC Response / Action:**

We would like to thank the EEC for their evaluation presented under this section. Each of the areas suggested by the EEC as having possible room for further improvement are addressed below and additional information provided:

1. “Consider whether the selection procedure is overcomplicated for the size of the University”

- We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. The Selection process for the PhD program has two streams of entry. The first stream of entry is by applying for PhD posts announced. Due to the fact that most faculty members are currently supervising PhD students, every semester (Spring and Fall of each year) we announce specific posts for which interested prospective students can apply for. These specific posts include the research area a specific faculty member would be interested to supervise a student for. Faculty members then examine the applications made for their posts, carry out interviews with those shortlisted, and successful candidates are offered a place on the program.
- The second stream of entry is by personal contact with faculty members. Interested prospective students contact faculty members and inquire if their research idea would be a good fit with a faculty research interest. If both parties consider this to be a good match, the student may then formally apply following the process as in the first stream of entry mentioned above, and given the approval of the faculty member and the DPPC, an offer is then made.

2. “There is no dedicated financial support for PhD researcher’s conference attendance.”

- We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. Financial support is offered to PhD students for conference attendance / participation in the following manner: those who wish to attend or present at conferences can apply for funding to the Office of the Vice Rector of Research. The review of the application is made taking into consideration the level at which the PhD student is at (year of study), the progress reports to date (DSO5 forms), the relevant recommendation(s) made by the supervisory team, and if research to be presented is co-authored with supervisor(s). Moreover, registration fees are waived for PhD students attending / presenting at colloquia and conferences organized by the University of Nicosia. Finally, PhD students can work as teaching assistants and the remuneration for this can either be used towards their fees or towards conference participation.
- In addition to the above, we are also currently examining various ways to provide supplementary financial support to further encourage our PhD students in attending conferences.

3. “There is no financial support for additional specific training that the researchers might need at later stages of their studies.”

- We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. Financial support is offered to PhD students for training in the following manner: those who wish to acquire additional training other than that offered by the University, can apply for funding at the Office of the Vice Rector of Research. The review of the application is made taking into consideration the level which the PhD student is at (year of study), the progress reports to date (DSO5 forms), and the relevant recommendation(s) made by the supervisory team.

4. “There are very few external speakers in the PhD seminars. This may be worth considering addressing”.

- We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. The PhD seminars include both internal speakers but also some external speakers (Visiting Professors). Depending on training needs identified appropriate speakers are selected.
- Through Erasmus+ mobilities we may also occasionally invite visiting faculty members to carry out ad-hoc training/seminars to our PhD students.
- Following your recommendation however, we will also plan to include in our series of seminars even more external speakers, by physical presence through Erasmus staff mobilities, always subject to lifting of current travel restrictions, but also possibly virtual.

5. “In the PhD seminars that were delivered in the previous academic year and were made available, there was very little training on specific research skills”.

- We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. As mentioned, training is decided upon assessment of specific training needs brought forward and/or identified by supervisors. These are continuously monitored, updated and upgraded to be both reactive to those needs identified but also proactive in a way to train students on any shortcomings they may encounter along their PhD journey.
- For instance, the seminars offered under the Research Skills Development Programme, aim to provide training on general but also specific research skills that are identified during the progress of the PhD students' studies. However, these are monitored and adjusted to fit those needs that may be identified and need to be offered, always with feedback from students' supervisory teams and from students themselves.
- In addition, students often attend consortia, and satellite events which take place (virtually or with physical presence) which assist in improving research skills.

6. “The PhD programme seems very big for the size of the faculty”

- We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. According to the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (CYQAA) regulations, there is a recommendation for a maximum number of PhD students a supervisor may have (maximum 5 PhD students), a recommendation which we strictly adhere to, and is reflected also in our Code of Practice and Regulations. Our selection process is thus quite strict so that we can keep our PhD student numbers within this recommendation, but also to retain the quality supervision we seek to provide to our students.

7. “There is no work allocation for PhD supervision”

- We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. Supervisors are compensated for their PhD supervisions. This takes the form of a monetary compensation, and a specific amount is paid for each PhD student a faculty member has under their supervision, and the amounts differ if it is a Main supervisory role or 2nd/3rd supervisory role.
- Faculty members may collaborate with their PhD students to assist in the preparation of modules and delivery of lectures. This often results in lifting some workload from faculty members, but also offers teaching experience opportunities to students.

- Following the comment however received from the EEC, a modification has been suggested to the PhD Board that faculty members who wish to receive time release instead of monetary compensation may be able to do so. This decision however, is pending Senate and Council approvals.
8. “There is no internal assessment on the progress of the PhD researchers that involves other academics outside their supervisory team”.
- We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. All students are assessed on their progress at the end of each academic year. This progress is recorded in DSO/5 – Joint Annual Review and DPPC’s Progress Report forms, which are then reviewed and assessed by the DPPC, comprised of academics outside the students’ supervisory teams.
  - Moreover, the Proposal that is submitted by students (usually 1.5 years into their PhD program) is also reviewed and assessment is recorded in DSO/6 – Research Proposal Approval Forms by the DPPC.
  - Finally, the Thesis is also examined by one internal member (outside supervisory team) and one external member (outside supervisory team, and from a University other than the University of Nicosia). The examination committee is proposed by the Doctoral Coordinator, and amended or confirmed by the Office of the Vice Rector of Faculty and Research.
9. “There is no formal consideration of ensuring that the PhD students have a chance to gain insights into pedagogical methods and teaching experience, which would be a major advantage for those who wish to pursue an academic career afterwards.”
- We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. Through the course provided primarily to faculty members (Faculty Professional Development Seminar on Teaching and Learning Theory and Practice (see Appendix for program content), PhD students also have the opportunity to participate in this course which indeed offers insights into pedagogical methods.
  - Moreover, PhD candidates are offered teaching experience opportunities to assist in the preparation of modules and delivery of lectures in cooperation with their supervisor(s) thus gaining teaching experience.



**8. Additional for joint programmes**  
(ALL ESG)

**N/A**

## B. Conclusions and final remarks

Based on the feedback received, the EEC has evaluated our PhD program very positively making references to “following university regulations that exist in relation to quality assurance expectations, our leadership and faculty have a strong desire to collectively work together on having quality programs, and our students progress and succeed in their studies”. Moreover, we have been commended for “exceptional support to students provided by our passionate and engaged teaching team, who place the interest of our students above all else, resulting in very strong mutual respect between faculty and students”. Additionally, the EEC has assessed that we have “high quality and committed teaching staff, the improvements in the quality of research output is evident, and there is an interest for international co-operations with other institutions and practitioner bodies that can provide accreditations”. Finally, the EEC has indeed evidenced our “clear commitment to the PhD program, which attracts applicants from many countries, has clear regulations, training and processes, and our students and faculty are committed to the production of academic work”.

We would like to thank the EEC once again for their positive comments and constructive recommendations, that have assisted us in providing additional information, which will present a clearer picture with regards to the PhD program processes in place, but also assist us in improving our offering to students and other stakeholders even further.

We are looking forward to the accreditation of our program so that we can continue to offer high quality service to our students and contribute to society with ground-breaking, quality research, but also enrich academia with competent, skilled scholars and academics.

### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Prof. Angelika Kokkinaki	Dean, School of Business	
Prof. Despo Ktoridou	Head, Department of Management	
Dr. Yioula Melanthiou	Program Coordinator	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

**Date:** 30/3/2021

