

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 20/12/2021

# Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**

University of Nicosia

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

**In Greek:**

Ηλεκτρολογική Μηχανική (1,5 χρόνια, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ)

**In English:**

Electrical Engineering (1,5 years, 90 ECTS, Master of Science)

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

## 0. Introduction

We would like to thank the members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and thorough work during the online evaluation of the MSc programme in Electrical Engineering and another three programs of the Department of Engineering (BSc Computer Engineering, BSc Electrical Engineering and PhD Electrical Engineering) on September 13-15, 2021. We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation. During the visit, the EEC members were given presentations about the University of Nicosia, the Department of Engineering, and the MSc Electrical Engineering programme, met the faculty and staff supporting the programme, and had a separate meeting with students and alumni of the programme. Furthermore, the EEC members were given a live video tour of the laboratories used by the programme.

We would like to note that the report of the committee is **extremely positive** with all 18 out of 18 quality indicators receiving the rating of “**Compliant**” (amongst the choices of: Compliant/Partially Compliant/Non-Compliant).

More specifically, the EEC states, amongst other:

- *“The members of UNIC gave extensive and detailed presentations and were very willing to answer questions asked by the committee. Additional complementary data and information were provided quickly to ensure a seamless evaluation procedure by the committee members. The committee firmly believes that this evaluation report has not been affected by the virtual nature of the visit. This is thanks to the efforts of all the parties involved.”*
- *“All in all, the EEC found that the UNIC has provided comprehensive documentation and information for this evaluation process. The EEC would like to express its gratitude to the UNIC colleagues for their efforts in accommodating and facilitating this evaluation of the program of study.”*
- *“The members of the EEC committee found the academic programme in MSc in Electrical Engineering to be compliant in all examined aspects. The existing course offerings provide a balance between engineering fundamentals and practice. Moreover, active learning is encouraged through lab work and other means presented by the faculty.”*

We do also appreciate the committee’s recommendations for improvement, which will enhance the quality of our program and we will be addressing those in the corresponding section of this response.

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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

We appreciate the EEC's assessment of this area. We note that **all quality indicators/criteria were assessed as "Compliant"** (amongst the choices of: Compliant/Partially Compliant/Non-Compliant).

### Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *"The ECC has found that Programme of MSc in Electrical Engineering has been well structured, follows well established principles, and reflects best practice. It meets the standard expected at international universities."*
- *"The content to be delivered is appropriate to the scope and the objective of the evaluated programme."*
- *"There is a sufficiently efficient mechanism for feedback, where for each course, students provide their feedback via formal questionnaires and faculty members can adjust their teaching according to this feedback."*
- *"The students have also been offered good opportunities for industry placements and internships."*
- *"In addition, the faculty members have tried to bridge the gap between teaching and research, by feeding their research to their teaching."*
- *"The department has a well organized administrative team, which support students and staff well. Furthermore, the department and the university have established the internal evaluation committee to ensure a reasonable procedure of quality assurance."*
- *"The ECC has found that Programme of MSc in Electrical Engineering has been well maintained by the Department of Engineering at the University of Nicosia. In particular, the programme has been bi-yearly reviewed by the department, where both internal and external assessors have been involved."*
- *As a result, this programme has been offered to students at international standards for topics, quality of teaching, resources and infrastructures."*
- *"The faculty members and the administrative staff have spent a great amount of efforts to build a supportive and friendly culture, which takes student feedback into account, and well support students for their studies. This has been particularly important during the Covid-19 pandemic, where the department has provided various good practices to avoid too much disruptions to the students' learning. For example, hybrid teaching has been carried out, where recorded lecture videos have been made available to the students."*
- *"The student-to-staff ratio is low, which means that students are provided with sufficient support."*

### Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

1.1 *“Currently, the department has provided a formal channel for students to feed their opinions and suggestions for individual courses back to the department. However, it is not clear to students how the department has taken these feedback into consideration. As such, the department may want to build a regular staff-student meeting, which not only helps the students to understand the actions taken by the department towards the student feedback, but also helps the department to detect any potential issues at a very early stage, instead of waiting until the end of each term. Furthermore, such a staff-student meeting can ensure that students are involved in the development of the programme and the update of the curriculum.”*

### Response/Action:

Prior to the pandemic the programme used to hold a Board of Studies meeting (BoS) with the students at least once a year. These meetings were informal and all faculty supporting the programme as well as all students enrolled in the program were invited to attend. The purpose is to provide a forum for the students to express their views about any aspect of the programme of study including the content of the curriculum, the running of classes (especially the electives), the organization of the lab courses, the availability of the laboratories, field trips, student clubs and societies, etc.

As of the Fall 2022 semester, the department plans to enhance this set-up as follows:

- Establish a continuous, online BoS in the student intranet where students can raise issues and receive formal feedback, describing all actions taken to address them.
- Hold a face-to-face BoS twice a year in the middle of each semester (6<sup>th</sup> week of classes) for each programme separately, including the MSc in Electrical Engineer
- Each BoS will be announced two weeks in advance together with a call for subjects to be included in the agenda.
- The agenda will always include a briefing by the programme coordinator regarding new developments/changes in the programme as well as an update on issues raised by students during the semester and the corresponding actions taken by the department to accommodate them. It will also conclude discussion of subjects proposed by students or faculty.
- The minutes of the BoS will be posted on the student intranet providing access for all the students of the programme.

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

We appreciate the EEC's assessment of this area. We note that **all quality indicators/criteria were assessed as "Compliant"** (amongst the choices of: Compliant/Partially Compliant/Non-Compliant).

### Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *"The Department clearly benefits from its relatively small staff and from an appropriate staff/student ratio, enabling a high-quality learning and teaching environment to operate in."*
- *"Teaching methodologies in use are appropriate. The course portfolio includes a mixture of theory and practical work across various courses."*
- *"Student feedback suggests they find interactions between faculty members and students satisfactory, especially due to relatively small classes."*
- *"Faculty members are readily available to students, including specific office hours."*
- *"The process for student assessment is evaluated appropriate."*
- *"The educational outcomes of this study program are well defined in the document Application for Evaluation – Accreditation Program of Study. For each of the courses (compulsory and elective), there is a clear specification of a) course purpose and objectives, b) learning outcomes, c) prerequisites, course content, bibliography, teaching methodology, and assessment."*
- *"Student feedback on teaching is directly received and considered by faculty members to improve course delivery and exam."*
- *"Appropriate size of department."*
- *"Good staff/student ratio."*
- *"Commitment of staff to their programmes and students."*
- *"Commitment of staff in use innovative teaching methods, including hybrid systems during the pandemic situation."*

### Areas of improvement and recommendations made by the EEC:

2.1 *"Consider fostering industrial internship opportunities available to MSc students."*

### Response/Action:

Through the collaboration with industry for existing internship opportunities already offered to BSc level students and through the partnerships existing within the funded programs, the department will place emphasis in linking Thesis work to the industry. Further links with the MSc programme and the industry will be provided through seminars and visits. Such actions will establish further bonds with the university and industry and also directly connect students to potential internship providers and future employers.

*2.2 “Consider getting student feedback during the term/semester to benefit the students and courses in the ongoing term/semester.”*

Response/Action:

We welcome the EEC’s suggestion which will be implemented as of the Spring 2022 semester. The student questionnaire will be managed by the Departmental Quality Assurance Committee and given to the students following the return of the graded midterm examination in order to have a comprehensive mid-semester feedback from the students regarding both the instructor and the course.



### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

We appreciate the EEC's assessment of this area. We note that **all quality indicators/criteria were assessed as "Compliant"** (amongst the choices of: Compliant/Partially Compliant/Non-Compliant).

#### Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *"Teachers at the programme are qualified."*
- *"Most of teachers use the English language often and they can communicate with their international students very well."*
- *"Their teaching duties are mostly mixed with their research duties. Their involvement into the research activities related to research founders from home and from abroad is stimulated at the university. The stimulation is applicable for getting the research projects from industry and abroad and for publishing the research achievements. Therefore, they publish their research results in different publications, where the largest focus is given to the scientific journals with the impact factor."*
- *"Teaching is well related with the fields of research. Teaching is also related with experiments, which are conducted in the laboratories within their teaching. Teachers, in addition to giving lectures to the students, conduct also the laboratory measurements and experiments, so a general impression for an observer is that the students see some important practice during their study. Mostly, the teachers are employed for the full time."*
- *"The teachers conduct their teaching in a way that it is comfortable to students and a two way that a dialogue with students is possible, which is appreciated by the students."*
- *"A core list of experienced professors represents a good background for the education of students."*
- *"The equipment for laboratory measurements and experiments as well as laboratories themselves seem well maintained."*
- *"Visits to industrial companies are occasionally organised in the field of power systems, which is a benefit to students."*

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

3.1 *"The teachers are faced with small groups of students, therefore, the number of elective classes is small, consequently, and some classes are not conducted due to less interests of students. The teachers and their institution are encouraged for more international cooperation."*

#### Response/Action:



With the support of the university, faculty members make efforts to increase research activity and enrich course material to reflect recent technological advancements and their importance to the industry. Additionally, the connection of the university with the industry increases the potential for employment of future graduates. The increasing impact of the efforts made will be promoted to potential students with the goal to attract higher numbers of students. The connections with universities abroad will be utilized through visits for both conducting academic seminars and establishing connections to the industry. The exchange of faculty members is also expected to lead to an extended international collaboration.

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

We appreciate the EEC's assessment of this area. We note that **all quality indicators/criteria were assessed as "Compliant"** (amongst the choices of: Compliant/Partially Compliant/Non-Compliant).

##### Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *"There are appropriate plans and teaching advisors to monitor and support student progression."*
- *"A range of entry requirements is accepted in order to support various educational backgrounds."*
- *"The department offers a wide range of courses."*
- *"The degree programs have a good structure, which is regularly reviewed to ensure industry relevance."*
- *"Teaching processes and practices are in line with the expected world-standards in this sector."*

##### Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

4.1 *"Developing an action plan leading to an increasing number of students, would be beneficial in many ways."*

##### Response/Action:

We appreciate the EEC's recommendation that is continuously implemented through the Department's strategic plan and includes both local as well as international student recruiting. Student recruiting is coordinated centrally by the Marketing Department in cooperation with the Office of Admissions and the Recruiting Unit. Further, as mentioned in the previous section, the connection with the industry, international partners, and research work will stimulate the interest of potential applicants and will lead to the increase in the number of students.

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

We appreciate the EEC's assessment of this area. We note that **all quality indicators/criteria were assessed as "Compliant"** (amongst the choices of: Compliant/Partially Compliant/Non-Compliant).

### Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *"According to the virtual tour video of the University that the EEC has seen, it seems that the university has modern campus laboratories and facilities."*
- *"Good student services including tutors and councilors are available to support students both in terms of academic and personal well-being."*
- *"Online Library is available to students."*
- *"Good communication between professors and students."*
- *"Hardworking, helpful and flexible to solve student's problems academic staff."*

### Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

5.1 *"To have students providing more timely feedback – not just at end of semester."*

### Response/Action:

This point has been addressed at section 2 earlier in the report:

We welcome the EEC's suggestion which will be implemented as of the Spring 2022 semester. The student questionnaire will be managed by the Departmental Quality Assurance Committee and given to the students following the return of the graded midterm examination in order to have a comprehensive mid-semester feedback from the students regarding both the instructor and the course.



## 6. Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

N/A



## 7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

N/A



## B. Conclusions and final remarks

The faculty members of the MSc in Electrical Engineering highly appreciate the feedback received by the EEC. The goal is the reinforcement of the strengths identified and the improvement based on the suggestions received. The compliance in all examined aspects will be continued and the balance between fundamentals and practice will be continued for the years to come. Active learning will continue to enrich the students' academic experience.



### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Dr George Gregoriou</b>	Dean, School of Sciences and Engineering	
<b>Dr Stelios Neophytou</b>	Head, Department of Engineering	
<b>Dr Ioannis Kyriakides</b>	Programme Coordinator	
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:** 21/12/2021



