

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 16/02/2026

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)
In Greek:
Διδακτορικό στις Επιστήμες Αγωγής
In English:
PhD in Educational Sciences
- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek and English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**
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 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 2nd column of each table, the HEI must respond on the following:*
 - *the areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The institution should respond to the EEC comments, in the designated area next each comment. The comments of the EEC should be copied from the EEC report **without any interference** in the content.*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on separate document(s). Each document should be in *.pdf format and named as annex1, annex2, etc.*

INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and thorough work during the on-site evaluation of the Department of Education and three of its programmes: the BED in Primary Education, MEd in Educational Sciences (E-Learning) and PhD in Educational Sciences on November 13th, 2025. 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 met with the faculty supporting the programme, and had separate meetings with students and alumni of the programme, as well as with external stakeholders that are members of the Department of Education advisory board.

In regard to the PhD programme in Educational Sciences, we would also like to thank the EEC for their extremely positive evaluation of the programme, in which all 21 quality indicators received the top rating of “Compliant” (amongst the choices of compliant, partially compliant, non-compliant).

In addition to the fully-compliant evaluation, the EEC stated among other:

- “It is very clear that the doctorate programme we have just reviewed and which are reported on here at the University of Nicosia has made outstanding gains in offering an excellent learning and teaching experience. We commend the department, school, and university for an excellent operation”.
- “The staff are highly professional and undertake a full portfolio of teaching. We were impressed with the quality of the teaching we observed on our site visit; engaging, student-centered, and creative”.
- “All alumni spoke in glowing terms of their experiences. In short, we were impressed with the high level of professionalism, motivation and enthusiasm by staff, administrators and the leadership of the Department, School and University for all aspects of delivering an excellent doctorate programme”.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge that we truly appreciate the committee’s recommendations for improvement, which will enhance the quality of our doctoral programme. We have specifically responded to these recommendations 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 would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its careful and constructive assessment of our doctoral programme’s design and development; their observations will inform our ongoing improvements. As identified as a strength by the EEC, our small-scale PhD programme deliberately provides flexible pathways for both full-time and part-time candidates, enabling close supervisory engagement and individualized pacing. This allows us to offer an adaptive framework of methodological and technical support, including targeted software resources and tailored guidance for students who employ diverse research approaches.

| Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For Official Use ONLY |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| Encourage PhD students to publish their thesis in English to enable to participate in the international community production. | Thank you for your comment. We fully endorse this recommendation and we have already started to act on it. From the first semester, PhD candidates in our programme will be explicitly advised on the benefits of writing their dissertations in English—advantages that include greater international visibility, higher likelihood of citation, broader opportunities for cross-institution collaboration, and improved academic and professional mobility. | Choose level of compliance: |

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

We thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its constructive evaluation of our student-centred learning, teaching and assessment practices. As the EEC noted, the small scale of our teaching provision enables genuinely student-centred pedagogy, with close interaction between supervisors and candidates and the flexible use of technology and task-based activities to support individual learning trajectories. Equally important is the consistent assessment structure applied across courses, which provides clarity and predictability for both students and staff, facilitates coherent feedback practices, and supports the fair and comparable evaluation of learning outcomes.

| Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For Official Use ONLY |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| No recommendations | Click or tap here to enter text. | Choose level of compliance: |

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

We thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its thoughtful appraisal of our teaching staff; their observations will guide our continued development. As the EEC noted, the programme benefits from transparent and well-defined recruitment and promotion procedures that secure merit-based selection and clear pathways for career progression, and the academic profile is strong, with all full-time faculty and the majority of part-time lecturers holding doctoral qualifications directly aligned with the programme's disciplinary scope. Crucially, there is a close alignment between faculty research and course content, which ensures that teaching and supervision are academically rich and reflect current developments in the field. Staff demonstrate sustained research productivity through publications in recognised international journals and through active participation in externally funded projects, while engagement with European research networks further strengthens the programme's international dimension. Finally, the fact that PhD theses are supervised by full-time faculty members provides continuity, stability, and an appropriate level of academic oversight, enhancing the quality and coherence of doctoral supervision.

| Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For Official Use ONLY |
|--|--|------------------------------------|
| <p>Consider a conversation at the level of the Vice Rector's office for Research and Teaching on the value of a Graduate College to build a more critical mass of doctoral researchers and sense of community.</p> | <p>We appreciate this comment on the importance of building a critical mass of doctoral researchers and a sense of community. On the one hand, we plan to do so by offering our programme in English as well, in an effort to attract a more international pool of talented doctoral students. On the other hand, part of this is also achieved through the activities of the Cyprus Universities Rectors' Conference (CURC). Members of the CURC are public and private universities licensed to operate in the Republic of Cyprus and are accredited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CyQAA). One of the activities of the CURC is the organization of the annual conference for doctoral students, where they have the opportunity to present their work, network with each other, develop synergies among themselves, and receive feedback about their research work from other students and professors. Finally, it should also be noted that the Office of the Vice-Rector for Faculty and Research annually organizes a Research Skills</p> | <p>Choose level of compliance:</p> |



| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | Development Program for doctoral students throughout the University within which doctoral students have the opportunity to interact with each other and exchange research ideas and feedback. | |
|--|---|--|



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

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

We thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its careful and constructive review of our arrangements for student admission, progression, recognition and certification. As mentioned by the committee, the doctoral programme is supported by a robust regulatory framework that ensures transparent admission criteria and procedures, clearly articulated supervisory roles and responsibilities, that are aligned with European doctoral standards.

| Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For Official Use ONLY |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| No recommendations | Click or tap here to enter text. | Choose level of compliance: |



5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

We thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its constructive review of our learning resources and student support. As indicated by the committee, the Teaching and Learning Resources, the Physical Resources, as well as the Human support resources are available to students and are all excellent.

| Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For Official Use ONLY |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| No recommendations | Click or tap here to enter text. | Choose level of compliance: |

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Once again, we thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its careful appraisal of our doctoral procedures. A principal strength identified by the EEC within this section of the evaluation concerned the transparency of the procedures that students and supervisors have to comply with. This was mentioned in regard to both, the quality of the dissertation and the supervision and assessment committees. These transparent arrangements support consistent standards, robust academic oversight, and confidence among candidates and staff in the fairness and integrity of dissertation supervision and evaluation.

| Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For Official Use ONLY |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <p>A minor suggestion could be to encourage PhDs who want to pursue an academic career to publish in English-language journals.</p> | <p>Thank you for your comment. We fully support this recommendation, and we have already started to act on it. Although we already have doctoral graduates who have written their dissertations in English and have published their work in peer reviewed journals in English, we will encourage students to do so to a larger extent so that their work can gain much greater international visibility and impact. Examples of some recent publications of our current students or graduates (in bold) are the following: Trikoilis, D. (2025). Resilient Teachers Stay: Personality Predictors of Retention in Greek Schools. <i>The Teacher Educator</i>, 61(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2025.2543800 Cruz Lorite, I. M., Nikolaou, M., Nisiforou, E., & Evagorou, M. (2025). Open schooling in science education: A systematic literature review. <i>European Journal of Educational Research</i>, 14(4), 1063-1085. https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-er.14.4.1063, Konstantinidou, A., & Nisiforou, E. (2022). Assuring the quality of online learning in higher education: Adaptations in design and implementation. <i>Australasian Journal of Educational Technology</i>, 38(4), 127–142. https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.7910</p> | <p>Choose level of compliance:</p> |

B. Conclusions and final remarks

| Conclusions and final remarks by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For Official Use ONLY |
|--|--|------------------------------------|
| <p>Integrate thesis supervision formally into the faculty workload model to ensure balanced staff responsibilities and maintain the quality of student supervision.</p> | <p>Thank you for this comment. Faculty members actually do have the option to reduce their teaching load when they supervise doctoral students.</p> | <p>Choose level of compliance:</p> |
| <p>Develop formal incentives to encourage staff to integrate their research into teaching. These could include: (i) small internal grants or seed funding for course development; (ii) temporary reductions in teaching load for pedagogical innovation; or (iii) competitive awards for innovative research-based teaching practices.</p> | <p>Thank you for this suggestion. Integrating our research into our teaching is a vital component of our current work. As a Department of Education, we take great care in utilizing research-based practices in our teaching, so our own research presents the perfect platform to do so. As a result, this is done naturally without the need for external incentives to do so. It should also be mentioned that certain seed grants are offered by the University. Moreover, faculty members also have the opportunity to obtain a reduced teaching workload when they are actively involved in funded research grant projects.</p> | <p>Choose level of compliance:</p> |
| <p>Begin a conversation in the School and University to consider the benefits of a Graduate College that pools expertise and resources made available to doctoral students. This might entail productive engagements with other Cyprus universities to be part of a consortium for a Graduate College. The benefits also enable networking amongst small cohorts from Departments who are able to join a bigger community.</p> | <p>We appreciate this comment and agree on the benefits of networking among the PhD students in Cyprus along with the benefits of pooling the expertise and resources available to doctoral students. At the moment, this currently takes place within the activities of the Cyprus Universities Rectors' Conference (CURC). Members of the CURC are public and private universities licensed to operate in the Republic of Cyprus and are accredited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CyQAA). One of the activities of the CURC is the organization of the annual conference for doctoral students, where they have the opportunity to present their work, network with</p> | <p>Choose level of compliance:</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>each other, develop synergies among themselves, and receive feedback about their research work from other students and professors.</p> | |
|--|---|--|

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its careful and supportive appraisal and we welcome its recognition of the programme’s strengths. First, the programme’s deliberately small and flexible structure which accommodates both full-time and part-time candidates and enables close, student-centred supervision. Second, an adaptive approach that ensures targeted methodological and software support for students who employ diverse research methods. Third, the consistent assessment frameworks across courses that provides clarity and predictability for students and staff. Moreover, recruitment and promotion procedures are identified as transparent and merit-based, supporting fair selection and clear career progression. In addition, the academic profile is evaluated as strong, with all full-time faculty holding doctorates aligned with the programme’s scope. Furthermore, faculty research aligns closely with course content and is reflected in sustained publication output, externally funded projects, and participation in European research networks. Importantly, PhD theses are supervised by full-time faculty, which ensures continuity and robust academic oversight. The programme is also underpinned by a robust regulatory framework for admission, progression, recognition, and certification that aligns with European doctoral standards. Finally, high-quality teaching and learning resources and physical infrastructure, together with comprehensive human support services such as the Centre for Research and Counselling Services (KESY), provide effective academic and welfare support.

Once again, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its professional and thorough work in providing constructive feedback and recommendations to further strengthen our doctoral programme.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Position</i> | <i>Signature</i> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Prof. Elena Papanastasiou | Dean of School of Education | |
| Dr. Marina Rodosthenous | Head of Department of Education | |
| Prof. Elena Papanastasiou | Programme Coordinator | |

Date: 16/02/2026

