



Doc. 300.1.2

# Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 21.9.2020

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Nicosia

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

**In Greek:**

Νομική (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

**In English:**

Law (4years, 240 ECTS, LLB)

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

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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

The LLB has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the LLB is designed very well and contains all relevant courses, as well as a large number of electives, with clear criteria for and methods of assessment, as well as aims and objectives, which are suitable for the achievement of learning. It has been noted that there are sufficient safeguards for quality assurance and a continuous process of monitoring the effectiveness of the programme, as well as rigorous and appropriate methods of assessment and marking criteria. It has also been noted that the programme is well managed and that there is a strong emphasis on identifying risks and opportunities for the programme's further development and expansion. The EEC was positively impressed by the energy and commitment of the teaching personnel and their desire to provide students with topical, unique and innovative modules. The EEC also noted the departmental strategy of attracting and retaining high quality staff, the strong link between research and teaching, the active pursuit of interdisciplinary connections and international collaborations, and the collaboration with legal experts and external stakeholders. It has been confirmed that the structure and content of the LLB are in compliance with European and international standards.

The EEC has further made suggestions for further improving the LLB. It would encourage the Department to consider provisions for second marking of assignments and examination scripts, as well as external oversight in cases of disputes of the marks. The recommendation for double marking has to be discussed as a general university policy, since it cannot be applied only at programme level. The Department will, however, ensure that there is immediate further enhancement of the internal review system at programme level, and of external oversight in cases of disputes of the marks. Furthermore, as part of the internal review process sample second marking will take place in order to assess whether there are significant discrepancies at course level which are not justified by the exercise of the instructor's academic freedom. We note that we already have external oversight in case of disputes of marks as noted also by the EEC. We have also in place a system of internal review of assignments and examination scripts. However, we do not have in place a system for second marking, since this is not a system applied by the University, or Cypriot universities more generally. We view the suggestion as one for further improvement and we will seriously consider it.

The EEC would also encourage a more holistic and inclusive approach to the development of new orientations, modules and international collaborations and a closer contact with the professional bodies which could provide ideas for further development of the programme and would enhance the employability of its graduates. The suggestion of the external committee is positively received and will seriously be taken into account in the development of new orientations, modules and international collaborations of the programme. Note that as further evidence of our constant effort to be in close contact with the academic and professional bodies, we have decided to introduce an additional elective programme for Greek law students, i.e. 'LLB-424 Εφαρμογές Διεθνούς και Ευρωπαϊκού Δικαίου' which has been requested from the Greek DOATAP. The course outline is attached as **Appendix A**. The Academic Path is accordingly amended.

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

The LLB has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the process of teaching and learning of the LLB is in compliance and that the program supports students' individual and social development. The teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching support the use of modern educational technologies and the implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths, ensuring a sense of autonomy in the learner and adequate guidance and support from the teacher. It is further noted that the LLB facilitates a student-centred learning environment and there are appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning. It has been confirmed that assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner. Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved and are consistently fairly applied to all students. It has further been confirmed that student assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework.

The EEC has also made suggestions for further improvement. It has suggested that library hours could be extended especially during examination period. We concur with the recommendation and will aim to discuss it as an issue of general university policy. It has also suggested that there is more transparency in the involvement of students in research assistantship. The recommendation is welcome and we will assess how we can ensure additional transparency in this area. The EEC has further suggested that there is introduction of double marking policy of examination papers and a formalization of practicum. The recommendation for double marking has to be discussed as a general university policy, since it cannot be applied only at programme level. The Department will, however, ensure that there is immediate further enhancement of the internal review system at programme level, and of external oversight in cases of disputes of the marks. Furthermore, as part of the internal review process sample second marking will take place in order to assess whether there are significant discrepancies at course level which are not justified by the exercise of the instructor's academic freedom. We note that we already have external oversight in case of disputes of marks as noted also by the EEC. We have also in place a system of internal review of assignments and examination scripts. However, we do not have in place a system for second marking, since this is not a system applied by the University, or Cypriot universities more generally. We view the suggestion as one for further improvement and we will seriously consider it. The EEC has further noted that teaching staff often perform the function of student welfare counsellors and it would be advisable to revisit the issue and examine its effectiveness. The recommendation is welcome and positively received and will be discussed as an issue of general university policy. We note that the University already employs academic counsellors and student welfare counsellors. Teaching staff may mostly engage in academic tutoring rather than as student welfare counsellors, although the co-ordinators of the programme might have increased functions.

### **3. Teaching Staff** (ESG 1.5)

The LLB has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the teaching staff consists of highly qualified and internationally educated employees, who are capable to ensure quality and sustainability of teaching and learning. The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skill training and development. The Department is further subject to quality assurance internal committees. It has been confirmed that the specializations and qualifications of faculty adequately support the delivery of the LLB, and that members of staff are research active, that the balance between teaching, research and administration appears reasonable, and that the staff is highly motivated and enthusiastic.

The EEC has also made suggestions for further improvement. It has been recommended that in case of an increase in student population, the number of full-time professors and teaching staff should be increased. We fully agree and this is part of our departmental strategy, which we will implement as the needs arise. It has also been suggested that the number of visiting professors could be increased. We concur and will aim to implement it.

#### **4. Students**

*(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)*

The LLB has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that there are clear rules on admission procedures, manual and website, as well as opportunities for scholarships, clear recognition process for credits earned at other institutions, active promotion of mobility, and pre-defined and clear regulations. Students are provided with comprehensive feedback, and the access policies, admissions processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.

The EEC has also made recommendations for further improvement. It has been suggested that scholarships granted on a performance basis should be revisited so that there is no hardship for students who may start with a scholarship, but lose it due to slightly lower performance. We concur with the recommendation and will aim to raise it before the appropriate university organs. It has also been suggested that there should be effort to continue to ensure integration of refugee students in the university community. We concur with the recommendation and will ensure that our efforts are further increased in this respect to the extent possible.

## 5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

The LLB has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the teaching and learning resources are adequate and that the physical resources are fit for purpose, and are ensured for changing circumstances. The university is committed to educational excellence that encompasses inclusive access to higher education and that fosters teaching and learning. It has further been noted that the monitoring of student progress can be seen as a best practice, and that learning resources are of good standard. Also, that student support is adequate to support the transfer programme.

The EEC has further recommended that law students could further benefit from student support at departmental level and from student mentoring. We welcome the recommendation and will aim to further implement it.





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

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

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

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## B. Conclusions and final remarks

We wish to thank the EEC for the professionalism they showed during the execution of their duties. The detailed discussion of all issues pertinent to the degree under evaluation, led to a fruitful discussion between the members of the EEC and the official representatives of the University and faculty members of the programme. The discussion proved to be extremely helpful due to the expertise of the members of the EEC and their willingness to share their suggestions and recommendations for further improving the programme. The demanding set of questions allowed us to elaborate on the pedagogical foundations of the programme and expand upon the content of the application form.

We have assessed and reviewed carefully the EEC report. We are pleased to note that the report is extremely positive, and we thank the EEC for their positive comments. We thank the external committee for concluding that it 'is very supportive of the LLB programme and did not identify and instances of non-compliance'. We also thank the EEC for its clear positive evaluation and recommendation for accreditation of the Department.

We fully acknowledge that all programmes are always amenable to further improvement, and indeed we have been constantly working towards further improving our programme since it was initially accredited. Accordingly, the suggestions for further improvement offered by the EEC are taken very seriously into account. We consider the suggestions of the EEC as very helpful and we will try to incorporate them to the widest extent possible. Having said that, we acknowledge that, as the EEC has noted, the recommendations aim to the further improvement of an already fully compliant Department. We thank the committee for all the suggestions/recommendations. We address each one herein, for further improving the LLB.

### **1. The Department could consider provisions for second marking of assignments and examination scripts as well as of external oversight in cases of disputes of the marks**

**Response/Action:** The recommendation for double marking has to be discussed as a general university policy, since it cannot be applied only at programme level. We note that we already have external oversight in case of disputes of marks. We have also in place a system of internal review of assignments and examination scripts. However, we do not have in place a system for second marking, since this is not a system applied by the University, or Cypriot universities more generally. The Department will ensure that there is immediate further enhancement of the internal review system at programme level, and of external oversight in cases of disputes of the marks. Furthermore, as part of the internal review process sample second marking will take place in order to assess whether there are significant discrepancies at course level which are not justified by the exercise of the instructor's academic freedom.

### **2. A more holistic and inclusive approach to the development of new orientations, modules and international collaborations would be beneficial**

**Response/Action:** The suggestion of the external committee is positively received and will seriously be taken into account in the development of new orientations, modules and international collaborations of the programme.

### **3. A closer contact with the professional bodies such as the Bar Association would provide ideas for further development of the programme and would undoubtedly enhance the employability of its graduates.**

**Response/Action:** The suggestion of the external committee is positively received and will be taken into account in the future development of the programme. Note that as further evidence of our constant effort to be in close contact with the academic and professional bodies, we have decided to introduce an additional elective **programme** course for Greek law students, i.e. 'LLB-424 Εφαρμογές Διεθνούς και Ευρωπαϊκού Δικαίου' which has been requested from the Greek

DOATAP. The course outline is attached as **Appendix A**. The Academic Path is accordingly amended.

**4. Library hours could be extended especially during examination periods.**

**Response/Action:** We concur with the suggestion which is welcome and we will aim to discuss it as an issue of general university policy.

**5. Teaching staff often perform the function of student welfare counsellors and it would be advisable to revisit this issue and examine its effectiveness.**

**Response/Action:** The recommendation is welcome and will be discussed as an issue of general university policy.

**6: When the number of student increases, the Department should consider increasing the number of teaching staff and in particular the number of full-time professors.**

**Response/Action:** We concur with the recommendation and will aim to implement it when the need arises.

**7: Consider whether to revise the system of granting scholarships**

As the committee notes, academic merit scholarships are granted on a performance basis per semester which may mean that some students may start with a scholarship, but may lose it in the process due to a slightly lower performance in a particular semester leading to hardship for some students. Whereas, the University organs have the necessary flexibility to correct any such injustices, the committee notes that an institutional change might help the students more.

**Response/Action:** The recommendation is received favourably, and will be addressed at the competent university bodies since the award of scholarships is a centralized issue for the university.

**7: Continue to ensure integration of refugee students in the university community**

**Response/Action:** The recommendation is received favourably and we will continue to aim to implement it and further improve our efforts where applicable.

We would like to thank the committee once more, both for the positive and fair evaluation, as well as the constructive comments and suggestions and the fruitful discussion that we had with its members during the lengthy virtual visit. We also thank the committee for the time and thoroughness it dedicated to the evaluation of the LLB and for helping us improve the LLB through the suggestions made. All recommendations of the committee refer to further improvement, and some need discussion and potential decision at Senate level as they are not applicable only to this specific Department. The recommendations and evaluation of the committee are seriously taken into account for the further improvement of the Department. We consider this endorsement under the conditions of external peer review as a resounding vote of confidence in the LLB and its potential for academic success.

We finally acknowledge the clear positive evaluation and recommendation for accreditation of the LLB.

### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Philippos Pouyioutas</b>	Professor, Rector	
<b>Panayiotis Angelides</b>	Professor, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs	
<b>Achilles C. Emilianides</b>	Professor, Dean	
<b>Christina Ioannou</b>	Associate Professor and Associate Dean	
<b>Christos Papastylianos</b>	Associate Professor and Head of the Department	
<b>Vagia Polyzoidou</b>	Assistant Professor and Programme Coordinator	

**Date:** 21.9.2020

