

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 23/March/2021

- **Higher Education Institution:**

University of Nicosia

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Διαδραστικά μέσα και κινούμενο σχέδιο, Πτυχίο (4 έτη, 240 ECTS,
Πτυχίο)

In English:

Interactive Media and Animation (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor of
Arts)

- **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.*

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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

The program has been considered to be compliant in all criteria of this section. Moreover, we would like to point out that the EEC members made very positive comments in this section, and in particular we note the following:

“The quality of the teaching staff described in the application has been proven in the online meetings”.

“There are satisfactory extracurricular activities”.

“The connection between students and tutors is close and sufficient”.

“The students get industry insights and contacts via their tutors and the projects offered”.

The EEC also noted as strength “the diversity of the projects offered”.

We consider that the EEC's comments quoted above clearly reflect the quality of our program.

Recommendations

The EEC commented on the presence of “Stop-Motion Animation” in both the BA and MA and the similarities between the two. We would like to point out that “Stop-Motion Animation” in the MA is a more demanding course than the equivalent in the BA as in addition to the animation, puppet making and set design workshops it includes two written research assignments and a major written report at the end of the semester submitted along with a comprehensive original film. These additional requirements make up for the higher level of the course as well as the additional ECTS and workload which apply to all MA courses. Furthermore, we would like to point out that “Stop motion animation” is not an introductory course as the stop motion animation technique is introduced at the second-year course “Multimedia Art and Aesthetics”.

The EEC further stated that it is “Unclear why the courses/projects come in the order they do; i.e. History of Digital Art (MULT-364) sits in the 6th semester”

We would like to clarify that the course “History of Digital Art” is offered in the 6th semester because it incorporates both a historical/conceptual and a practical component aiming at developing critical thinking in its students. For this reason, it requires students to have a level of maturity as well as a good level of diverse technical skills in order to be able to understand and appreciate the digital art culture and to create their own digital artworks.

Furthermore, as a general rule, our courses have certain prerequisites that aim to create a smooth and suitable transition from one course to another. This ensures that students have the prior knowledge needed before entering a higher-level course.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

The program has been considered to be compliant in all criteria of this section. Moreover, we would like to point out that the EEC members made some positive comments in this section, and in particular we note the following:

“The overall impression towards learning and teaching is satisfactory.”

“The teaching staff accommodates a high amount of office hours to support the students individually. The average number of students that are in a classroom or lab is good.”

We would like to thank the EEC for their positive comments and reassure them that we always place our student in the centre of learning, and we will continue to do so, striving at creating the best possible teaching and learning environment for our students.

No issues were identified.

3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

With regards to teaching staff the EEC found no problem area that have to be addressed and found the program to be compliant.

In particular, the EEC stated that there is a “Good number of teaching staff” and that the “Ratio of academic staff in relation to students is good”. The EEC also noted that “the status of the academics is appropriate for the program”. The EEC also pointed out that “there are some synergies of research and teaching”.

We welcome these remarks and reiterate our commitment to low class sizes (Ratio of academic staff in relation to students) in general.

The EEC additionally noted that the recruited staff is qualified, but they did not get any insights regarding the recruitment process.

We would like to point out that all vacant faculty positions are advertised locally and internationally to ensure the highest caliber candidates. Candidates are screened and a selection of candidates are interviewed by a committee of senior faculty members. Candidates are then invited to present a 'mock' lecture to assess their teaching effectiveness and capabilities. This lecture is attended by senior faculty of the department.

Further details about the recruitment process can be found in the departmental application submitted to the EEC on page 42 under the section “Recruitment and selection process for academic staff”.

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

The program has been considered to be compliant in all criteria of this section, with the EEC pointing out that their expectations were met.

The EEC also commented that they were “surprised that students are being admitted without demonstrating a portfolio. However, the selection process and further evaluation of such students is convincing.”

We would like to point out that in addition to the university admission requirements our department has additional admission requirements based on which applicants are expected to submit an art portfolio during an interview. It is only in rare cases that an applicant with no portfolio but with great and convincing interest for the program is considered for admission on probation. In such cases the students’ progress is closely monitored and evaluated at the end of the first academic year in order to determine whether they are suitable to continue with their studies.

There were no further recommendations for improvement in this section.

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

We welcome the EEC positive comments regarding resources in the department and the University as a whole. With regard to student support the EEC commented that "There is extensive student support through academics and non-academics."

With regards to infrastructure the EEC pointed out that "The IT infrastructure, technical equipment and workshops are difficult to evaluate through online meetings."

We would like to ensure the EEC that, although our infrastructure might have been difficult to evaluate through the video submitted to the EEC for evaluation, it is sufficient, and it includes specialized facilities for all the disciplines that we teach. Furthermore, we would like to point out that in the past year the University has invested in multi-million-euro lab facilities. Indeed, the department and program have inaugurated a new Virtual Reality and Interactive Arts lab in 2019 as well as a fully equipped Stop-motion Animation studio.

We would also like to welcome the EEC comments that "the human support resources are clearly a strength. The academic team is enthusiastic and passionate. They accommodate a high number of office hours to advise their students. Additionally, there is qualified administrative staff supporting the learners."

There were no recommendations under this section.

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

The program of Interactive Media and Animation would like to thank the EEC for their virtual visit, for the constructive discussions on the day and for their excellent feedback in their report. Moreover, we would like to welcome the EEC's positive conclusions. More specifically the EEC noted that "The committee has a positive overall impression of the department. The academic staffs' broad professional interests, expertise, and passion have particularly convinced the members of the EEC."

We also welcome the EEC recommendations based on which we are taking the following actions:

Firstly, we would like to explain that due to the fundamental differences between the fine art and the interactive media and animation programs, and with all the diverse disciplines that we need to cover in our curriculum, it is not possible to have four projects with different amount of credits as in the Fine Art program.

Instead, in order to allow students to place more focus on their final project as it was suggested in the departmental report, we are proposing to reduce the concomitant workload of the final semester by 6 ECTS. The course "Stop Motion Animation" will therefore be moved to the 6th Semester. Additionally, and in order to achieve the proposed workload reduction, the course "Multimedia-Based Learning" will be blended with the course "Human Computer Interaction" to form a single up-to-date course entitled "User Experience (UX) Design" (Appendix 1) which will be taken in the 5th semester. The new course will combine the theoretical knowledge of the two preceding courses in a more contemporary context supported by hands-on studio practice. The revised semester breakdown can be found on Appendix 2 of this document.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our appreciation to the EEC members for their positive evaluation of the BA in Interactive Media and Animation and the cordial and constructive manner in which they have conducted their assessment.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
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Appendix 1

Course Syllabus

Course Code	Course Title	ECTS Credits
MULT-366	User Experience (UX) Design	6
Prerequisites	Department	Semester
MULT-360	Design and Multimedia	Spring
Type of Course	Field	Language of Instruction
Required	Interactive Media and Animation	English
Level of Course	Lecturer(s)	Year of Study
1 st Cycle		3 rd
Mode of Delivery	Work Placement	Corequisites
Conventional	N/A	N/A

Course Objectives:

The main objectives of the course are to:

- Introduce Students to UX design based on the latest tech product design trends
- Enable students to design digital products and services that are useful, usable, and desirable
- Offer inside into the different phases of the user-centered design process, as well as the deliverables produced in each phase
- Analyze user research, including various techniques used to gather knowledge about users' needs and characteristics and collect user feedback on design deliverables
- Guide students to become proficient with the most important UX design principles and best practices and design user interfaces that lead to great user experience

Learning Outcomes:

After completion of the course students are expected to be able to:

- Understand the definition and principles of UX Design in order to design successful digital products.
- Achieve a deep understanding of the entire user-centered design process—the phases, deliverables, and industry-standard tools.
- Learn the basics of user research and how it helps design better products.
- Discover the benefits of prototyping, from low-fidelity all the way to interactive prototypes that look and feel real.

- Explain why they made particular design decisions, as well as provide constructive critique on design deliverables done by others.

Course Content:

1. Introduction to User Experience (UX) Design
2. The User-Centered design process
3. User research
4. Design Principles
5. Accessibility
6. Content Design
7. User Flows
8. Wireframes & Prototypes
9. User Testing
10. Design Critique

Learning Activities and Teaching Methods:

Lectures, videos, demonstrations, lab tutorials, exercises and assignments

Assessment Methods:

Participation, homework, projects, written assignments, final project

Recommended Textbooks / Readings:

Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Year	ISBN
A Project guide to UX design, second edition	Russ Unger and Carolyn Chandler	New Riders	2012	ISBN13: 978-0321815385

Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Year	ISBN
Don't Make Me Think, Revisited: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability (3rd Edition)	Steve Krug	New Riders	2014	ISBN-13: 978-0321965516

Appendix 2

INTERACTIVE MEDIA & ANIMATION | SEMESTER BREAKDOWN

1st YEAR 1st Semester / FALL	1st YEAR 2nd Semester / SPRING
ART 135 Fundamentals of Drawing	DES 126 Introduction to Typography
DES 116 Fundamentals of 2D Design	MULT 161 Interactive Design for Social Media
DES 260 Photography I	COMM 117 Video Production
MULT 160 Introduction to Multimedia	MULT 164 Programming Principles
ENG 101 English Composition	DES 270A Photography II

2nd YEAR 3rd Semester / FALL	2nd YEAR 4th Semester / SPRING
COMM 116 Audio Production	ART 281 History of Art
DES 226 Digital Imaging	MULT 265 Visual Effects
MULT 250 Storyboarding and 2D Animation Techniques	MULT 270 Mathematics and Art
MULT 260 Multimedia Art and Aesthetics	MULT 251 Introduction to Web Development
ART 111 Greek Art	COMM 200 Business & Professional Communication

3rd YEAR 5th Semester / FALL	3rd YEAR 6th Semester / SPRING
MULT 360 Interface Design and Development	MULT 364 History of Digital Arts
MULT 361 3D Modelling and Animation	MULT 370 Advanced 3D Modelling and Animation
MULT 365 Interactive Narrative	MULT 380 Virtual and Augmented Reality
MULT 366 User Experience (UX) Design	MULT 362 Stop Motion Animation
DES 206 Graphic Design (Minor)	ART330 Handmade Animation

4th YEAR 7th Semester / FALL	4th YEAR 8th Semester / SPRING
MULT 414 Research Methodologies in Applied Multimedia	MULT 460 Multimedia Project Management
MULT 453 3D Game Development	MULT 484 Applied Multimedia Final Project
DES 256 Editorial Design (Minor)	DES 346 Graphic Design for Social & Commercial Advertising (Minor)
BADM 231 Business Communications	PSY 110 General Psychology I
DES 306 Illustration	