

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 11.03.2021

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** Humanities and Social Sciences
- **Department:** Languages and Literature
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme

In Greek:

Αγγλική Γλώσσα και Λογοτεχνία (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English: English Language and Literature (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programmes' 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.300.3.1/2 and 300.3.1/1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department 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 (300.3.1/1).*
- *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)

Sub-areas

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

1.3 Public information

1.4 Information management

The BA in English Language and Literature programme (henceforth the “BA programme”) is found to be fully compliant with all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified by the EEC.

With reference to the EEC report, the BA programme is well-designed and coherent, with clear aims and objectives aligned with the principles of higher education of the Council of Europe. The semester structure ensures smooth transitions, and the courses are found to be monitored internally and externally according to international standards. The design of the procedures and policies for quality assurance of the BA programme are defined as sound and well-documented by the Committee. The EEC also notes additional strengths in relation to the programme such as: the design and development of the programme's courses are continually evaluated and updated where needed, the range of electives is varied, career information is clearly offered, and the programme information is effectively managed; both for internal and external use by the public. The EEC positively notes that student feedback is treated seriously and is acted upon at different levels by the Head of Department, the Programme Coordinator and the Departmental Council.

As an area of improvement, the EEC notes that alumni relations can be intensified although staff seem to stay in touch with some graduates. We welcome this suggestion and will explore further ways to strengthen our alumni relations beyond the use of social media (i.e. the existing Facebook page “**UNIC English Language and Literature**”) and the alumni related activities organized by UNIC departments of Student Affairs and the Career Success Centre in order to communicate with the BA programme alumni.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Sub-areas

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

2.2 Practical training

2.3 Student assessment

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

The BA programme is considered to be fully compliant with criteria 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

The EEC positively noted that the process of teaching and learning is flexible, student-centred, and with a well-balanced mixture of theory and practice. There is a set of core courses which ensures uniformity and a basis from which students are expected to proceed as autonomous learners within their individual areas of concentration of studies. The BA programme manages to balance courses related to different areas of linguistics and literature; it allows for individual variation, as the students are expected to customise the list of their elective courses. A variety of these is generally available and the allocation of ECTS units is flexible enough to cover individual needs. There are also options “Practicum” and “Research project.”

The EEC has also made some recommendations for further improvement regarding the content of the BA programme which the Departmental Council has considered.

1/The EEC recommends the Department to consider introducing an obligatory research thesis during the fourth year of studies since this is an expectation at the BA level in other educational systems, and could justify the need for a fourth year at this level.

Action/Response: The Department concurs with the recommendation and notes that we will proceed with a change in the existing pathway (see **Appendix I**) which is already discussed and voted by the Departmental Council, and will be taken to the School Council, the Curriculum Affairs Committee and the Senate for ratification. In essence, we propose an adjustment to the existing block “Thesis/Practicum” on the pathway which currently is for 0-6 ECTS to become 6-12 ECTS.

2/The Department may want to consider introducing an obligatory ELT practicum, which may ensure the uniform qualification of all graduates in terms of ELT - and may indeed be required for their employment by educational agencies outside Cyprus (and in the future).

Action/Response: The suggested adjustment to the pathway (see **Appendix I**) will give an opportunity to the students to choose one or even both options, Thesis and Practicum, in the fourth year of their studies.

3/The EEC recommends that the Department may want to consider introducing a peer monitoring system in the area of assessment, for example by appointing co-examiners to comment on exam questions and grades.

Action/Response: The Department already has the practice of informally commenting on the grades after each exam session at Departmental Councils, but further we will introduce the practice of peer review of exam questions by staff working in the same or similar teaching areas.

4/The Department may want to consider introducing some quantification of the learning activities in the text of the syllabi. This will make the calculation of ECTS workload more transparent and available to students.

Action/Response: The syllabi used in the BA programme are consistent with the format currently in use across the University and approved by CYQAA. The University is ECTS Label and Diplomat Supplement Label holder and has used the Tunning Methodology to re-engineer its programmes and courses using Learning Outcomes and ECTS. During the two year re-engineering process, the ECTS workload was calculated and confirmed by both faculty and students, the latter providing feedback with regards their weekly workload pertaining to the weekly learning/assessment activities. More quantitative information is provided on the course outline distributed to students at the first week of classes and during the semester. We take on board the EEC suggestion for further improving our practice. If we are given an appropriate quantification marker, we will readily note it on all our syllabi.

5/The EEC further suggests that the Department may wish to consider anonymising examination material to ensure the blind application of grading criteria.

Action/Response: We welcome such a suggestion and have discussed it at a Departmental Council. Further, we will raise this issue at a School level, although blind examination marking is not applied currently either in our University, or within the Cypriot higher education system.

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

- 3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development
- 3.2 Teaching staff number and status
- 3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

The BA in English programme is considered to be fully compliant with all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified by the EEC and a number of strengths have been noted.

The EEC notes that the Department has tenured an adequate number of staff members in the relevant subdisciplines, with an appropriate range in rank. The recruitment process and promotion criteria are transparent and clear. The promotion criteria explicitly take three areas of service into consideration: research, teaching and administration, showing that good teaching is recognized and rewarded. The faculty teaching on the BA programme is adequately ranked and appreciated. The EEC notes the impressive background and experience of the current faculty, as well as their dedication to teaching and research. Several grants, international projects and publications show that staff members are involved in innovation. The staff publications are related to their areas of expertise and to the courses they teach.

As an area of improvement and with reference to both the BA in English Language and Literature and the MA TESOL programmes, the committee commented that “it is not entirely clear how the

members of the teaching staff are supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills.” We would like to explain that the University, among various other opportunities, regularly offers to all faculty the following teaching training:

- Faculty Professional Development Seminar on Teaching and Learning Theory and Practice – a 36-hour professional development seminar that leads to a Certificate, in the areas of contemporary teaching methods, new technologies in learning and online education. The Seminar is the outcome of the collaboration between the Pedagogical Support Unit (PSU), the e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit (e-PSU), the Department of Education, the Technology Enhanced Learning Centre (TELC) and the University of Nicosia Library
- **Research Skills Development** – a 13-week program open to all faculty
- Moodle Training – offered by the Technology Enhanced Learning Centre each semester
- WebEx Training courses for faculty (SWAY, WEBEX BREAKOUT SESSIONS, WEBEX PERSONAL ROOMS, ONEDRIVE, OFFICE 365, MOODLE INTEGRATION, ARTICULATE STUDIO 360, STORYLINE, etc.)

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

Sub-areas

- 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria
- 4.2 Student progression
- 4.3 Student recognition
- 4.4 Student certification

The BA programme is considered to be fully compliant with all the criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified in this area.

The EEC finds that the student admission process appears to be carefully thought out and appropriately publicised. The committee notes as a strength that the admission regulations provide for a number of alternative means of certification of English language proficiency, which may be easily accessible to applicants from distinct backgrounds. It is further noted that a set of rules for monitoring student progress and for the recognition of work done in other institutions are available to students. The Diploma Supplements issued for both the BA in English Language and Literature and the MA in TESOL degrees follow the relevant guidelines and provide sufficiently detailed descriptions of the content of each course of study and of the individual student's accomplishments. The EEC notes that a number of alternative certification documents are available, as appropriate certification may be required in different circumstances. In all cases, the relevant rules seem to be quite straightforward, directing students to the competent authorities.

The EEC states two areas of improvement in this section:

1/The alternative means of certification of English language proficiency (which may indeed be useful to applicants from different backgrounds) are not always equivalent and some confusion may arise as to the exact level of attainment required.

Action/Response: The English language proficiency examinations, that we accept in order to verify a candidate's language proficiency, have been checked carefully for equivalence following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Cambridge English Scale (<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/cambridge-english-scale>), and are fully compliant with CYQAA guidelines on English language proficiency <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/el/nea-ekdiloseis/anakoinoseis-el/534-02-07-2020-epipeda-gnosis-tis-anqlikis-glossas-gia-foitisi-se-programmata-ptychiaka-kai-metaptychiaka-ta-opoia-prosferontai-sta-anqlika>.

These examinations are stated on the University's website as follows:

The list below provides the minimum English Language Requirements (ELR) for enrollment to the programme of study. Students who do not possess any of the qualifications or stipulated grades listed below and hold IELTS with 4.5 and above, are required to take UNIC's NEPTON English Placement Test (with no charge) and will receive English Language support classes, if and as needed, from UNIC's International Gateway Centre (IGC).

- TOEFL – 525 and above
- Computer-based TOEFL – 193 and above

- Internet-based TOEFL – 80 and above
- IELTS – 6 and above
- Cambridge Exams [First Certificate] – B and above
- Cambridge Exams [Proficiency Certificate – C and above
- GCSE English Language “O” Level – C and above
- Michigan Examination of Proficiency in English (CaMLA) – Pass
- Pearson PTE General – Level 3 and above
- KPG (The Greek Foreign Language Examinations for the State Certificate of Language Proficiency) – Level B2 and above
- Anglia – Level B2 and above
- IEB Advances Programme English – Pass
- Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English (ECPE) Michigan Language Assessment by: Cambridge Assessment English & University of Michigan – 650 average score for ALL skills and above

2/The EEC report states that, when it comes to the Leaving Certificate minimum requirements, the information provided (“15 out of 20”) may not be sufficiently informative to applicants from different educational backgrounds.

Action/Response: The Leaving Certificate (“15 out of 20”) is a University-wide entry requirement for candidates with Cypriot high school background. The BA in English Language and Literature programme adheres to the existing University requirements. We have already addressed this with the Rectorate and we expect that action will be taken to make it more informative.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

5.2 Physical resources

5.3 Human support resources

5.4 Student support

The BA in English Language and Literature programme is considered to be fully compliant with all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified in this area.

The EEC notes that the Department offers a vast amount of resources and material for students that they can use. The University's library offers online solutions to the students and ensures them access to online material that is useful for their academic progress. The instructors provide students with additional material that offers them guidance and understanding of the courses.

Students shared that they are very satisfied with their instructors' guidance and support. Instructors are also in frequent contact with the students personally, as necessary, and sometimes on the recommendation of student affairs.

The infrastructure of the University seems to be able to handle any increase in the number of students. The courses are successfully held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the live sessions and recordings are available to students at any given time. Students expressed satisfaction about the flexibility of the online teaching. Finally, student mobility within the EU is active for both studies and faculty.

With specific reference to the BA programme, the EEC has further suggested an area for possible improvement:

1/Student mobility for studies outside the EU is low and can further be improved.

Action/Response: We welcome such a recommendation most warmly. As a Department, we will continue encouraging the participation of our students in the international exchange under the Erasmus+ network which is run by UNIC Erasmus Office. Regarding student mobility outside the EU, the Departmental Council will explore the opportunities that exist in relation to the international partners of the University of Nicosia (i.e. Iliia State University, Georgia; Centro Universitario de Grande Dourados, Brazil; Zhejiang University Ningbo Institute of Technology, China).

Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)

Sub-areas

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

6.3 Supervision and committees

N/A

7. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

N/A

B. Conclusions and final remarks

We have reviewed very carefully the EEC report and we are pleased to find that the report is extremely positive. We especially thank the EEC for their encouragement and comments on the strengths of our BA in English Language and Literature programme. In the concluding remarks of the report, the EEC states that “Student numbers are relatively small on the BA programme. We do not see this as a problem. In fact, it is a distinct advantage for the student experience. Judging by the responses we received from the students we met, satisfaction levels were high.” For us, as faculty, such an acknowledgement of our efforts and the quality we seek to offer to our students is really satisfying.

The EEC notes also that “The committee did not have the opportunity to look at students’ work: assessments, projects, examination papers, essays, etc., so it was impossible to take a view of the academic level of the students’ work or of the quality of the feedback given to students. Even though it may not strictly be part of the requirements on this occasion, the Department might consider making some student work available for future evaluations.”

Response/Action: We will be happy to provide the committee with access to students’ work and feedback given by faculty upon request

We would like to express our gratitude to the EEC for their professionalism work during the preliminary evaluation of the BA programme. We highly appreciate the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation and the online interviews. The productive discussions that took place between the EEC and the official representatives of the University, the faculty members of the programme, and the student representatives proved to be extremely helpful. The expertise of the members of the EEC, their willingness to share knowledge and experience,

and their recommendations for further improvement of our programme permitted us to dwell on the philosophy and pedagogy we wish to see embodied in our BA in English Language and Literature programme. The ambiance of the online interviews allowed us to elaborate on the pedagogical foundations of the programme and to expand further upon the content of the application form.

Lastly, we would like to thank the committee for providing specific recommendations for the strengthening of the BA programme. We do welcome these recommendations as they will enhance the quality of our programme. Since we are working continuously towards further improvement of our programme, the suggestions offered by the EEC are taken very seriously into account and we will work to incorporate them into the BA in English programme structure.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>		<i>Signature</i>
	Click to enter Position	
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	Click to enter Position	

Date: 11.03.2021

APPENDIX I

DEGREE PATHWAY

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS (150 credits)

CODE	TITLE	ECTS
LALI 120	Introduction to Fiction	6
LALI 130	Introduction to Drama	6
LALI 140	The Science of Linguistics	6
LALI 135	Literature and Criticism	6
LAL I 141	General Linguistics	6
LALI 148	Teaching English as a Foreign Language I	6
LALI 150	Introduction to Poetry	6
LALI 155	Shakespeare	6
LALI 160	Pedagogical Grammar	6
LALI 200	Modern and Contemporary American Literature	6
LALI 240	Applied Linguistics	6
LALI 261	English Morphology and Syntax	6
LALI 272	Gender in Literature	6
LALI 280	English Phonetics and Phonology	6
LALI 295	Research Methods in Linguistics and EFL	6
LALI 362	Semantics and Pragmatics	6
LALI 350	The English Poem	6
LALI 370	Sociolinguistics	6
LALI 385	Literary Theory and Criticism	6
LALI 303	Modernism /Postmodernism	6
LALI 320	The Victorian Novel	6
LALI 310	World Literature in English	6
LALI 400	Contemporary Literature	6
LALI 460	Translation	6
LALI 490	Psycholinguistics	6

PROJECT/PRACTICUM ELECTIVE (0-6 Credits) Suggested change: 6-12

LALI 495	Research Project	6
LALI 498	Practicum	6

ELECTIVES: LINGUISTICS & TEFL (18-36)

CODE	TITLE	ECTS
LALI 372	Language and Identity (R)	6
LALI 274	Computer Aided Language Learning (R)	6
LALI 491	Historical Linguistics (R)	6
LALI 175	Intercultural Communication	6
LALI 322	Course Design and Evaluation in TEFL	6
LALI 375	Bi/Multilingual Education (CLIL)	6
LALI 377	Teacher Development in TEFL I	6
LALI 486	Teacher Development in TEFL II	6
LALI 461	Translation II	6
LALI 248	Teaching English as a Foreign Language II	6
LALI 483	Discourse Analysis and Conversation	6

ELECTIVES: LITERATURE (18-36)

LALI 335	Children's Literature (R)	6
LALI 442	Literature in Teaching (R)	6
LALI 482	Authors in Context (R)	6
LALI 302	America in Literature and Film	6
LALI 235	Romantic and Victorian Poetry	6
LALI 330	Modern Drama	6
LALI 471	Memoir and Life-Writing	6

LALI 380	Intertextuality and Literary Relations	6
LALI 382	Case Studies in Literature	6
LALI 480	Creative Writing	6

FOREIGN LANGUAGES ELECTIVES (12-18 credits)

Code Title		ECTS
FREN 101	French Language and Culture I	6
FREN 102	French Language and Culture II	6
FREN 201	French Language and Culture III	6
GERM 101	German Language and Culture I	6
GERM 102	German Language and Culture II	6
GERM 201	German Language and Culture III	6
GREK 101	Greek Language and Culture I	6
GREK 102	Greek Language and Culture II	6
ITAL 101	Italian Language and Culture I	6
ITAL 102	Italian Language and Culture II	6
ITAL 201	Italian Language and Culture III	6
RUS 101	Russian Language and Culture I	6
RUS 102	Russian Language and Culture II	6
RUS 201	Russian Language and Culture III	6

LANGUAGE EXPRESSION (12-24 credits)

Code Title		ECTS
BADM 332	Technical Writing and Research	6
COMM 200	Business and Professional Communication	6
COMM 300	Group Discussion and Communication	6
ENGL 101	English Composition	6

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES ELECTIVES (0-18 credits)

Code Title		ECTS
ANTH 105	Cultural Anthropology	6

ANTH 135	Experiencing the Other	6
COMM 441	Media and Cultural Theory	6
HIST 202	World History Since 1500	6
HIST 203	Modern Europe	6
PHIL 101	Introduction to Philosophy	6
PHIL 120	Ethics	6
PSY 110	General Psychology I	6
PSY 111	General Psychology II	6
PSY 210	Social Psychology	6
SOC 101	Principles of Sociology	6

COMPUTER AND MATHEMATICS ELECTIVES (12-24 credits) Suggested change: 6-18

Code	Title	ECTS
COMP 150	Microcomputer Applications	6
COMP 151	Fundamental Concepts of Information & Computer Technologies	6
MATH 221	Statistics I	6
MULT 160	Introduction to Multimedia	6

NOTE: The student must complete 240 ECTS credits and all programme requirements. A minimum cumulative grade point average (CPA) of 2.0 is required. Thus, although a 'D-' is a PASS grade, in order to achieve a CPA of 2.0 an average grade of 'C' is required.