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Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance  
and Accreditation in Higher Education,  
Chair of the Council, Prof Mary Koutselini  
Nicosia, Cyprus



13 April 2018

Dear Professor Koutselini,

Subject: MSc Sport and Exercise Sciences - External Evaluation Report, following 13th of March 2018 evaluation visit

The UCLan Cyprus team would like to thank the external evaluation committee members for their valuable comments and suggestions towards enhancing the MSc Sport and Exercise Sciences programme at UCLan Cyprus. We have addressed the comments provided by the committee and we believe that the proposed recommendations have enabled us to significantly refine and strengthen the programme and its market appeal.

This document presents our responses and comments, following the conclusions and suggestions of the external evaluation committee. For ease of reference, we have copied the recommendations and suggestions of the committee and we provide our responses and comments underneath each one. We remain at your disposal for any additional clarifications necessary.

**1. "Support the course with more laboratory teaching and research resources that have the potential to also improve academics' research portfolio quality"**

**Response:** The course has the full support of the UCLan Cyprus Sports Lab. The Sports Lab includes state of the art equipment that can be used for fitness level evaluation in athletes and for prognostic purposes in various sporting and non-sporting populations. This allows

the students in the course to conduct quality research projects with high impact in the area of sport science and rehabilitation. The involvement of the students with the Sports Lab projects in the area of rehabilitation is evident by the thematic areas of the ongoing projects and also research publications of the academics in the MSc Sport and Exercise Sciences program at UCLan Cyprus. Specifically, the Isokinetic device intended for medical purposes, such as to measure, evaluate and increase the strength of muscles. Furthermore, it provides important information regarding muscle functionality, imbalances, injury diagnosis and also can be used for post-operative rehabilitation. The Quark CPET allows the determination of cardiovascular performance in various clinical and non-clinical populations. The capability to be used as a spirometer or in combination with the 12 lead ECG may allowed numerous research projects for clinical populations in the area of sports rehabilitation like cardiac rehabilitation, cancer survivors, diabetics etc. Furthermore, the various additional anthropometric, and performance equipment that are also located in the Sports Lab provide several opportunities for the students and academics to get involve with rehabilitation related research projects.

With regards to laboratory teaching, as indicated in the course description (and specific module descriptions), the majority of the modules consist of a lecture session and a practical/lab session. The practical sessions will be delivered in the Sports Lab. This is an essential aspect of our programme delivery, as student will be able to apply theory in practise as part of their learning process

## 2. "There is a need for specialisation in research (i.e rehabilitation in injuries) "

**Response:** The MSc Sport and Exercise Sciences academic team is composed of an interdisciplinary blend of academics and clinical specialists with research expertise in various areas, including but not limited to: fitness assessments in elite athletes and first responders, orthopaedic trauma and trauma rehabilitation, identification of muscular imbalances of the lower limbs and their associations to musculoskeletal injuries, injury prevention and reoccurrence through exercise modalities, the effects of exercise on the Heart Rate Variability in clinical populations and especially Type II diabetics, the role of sport in society, sport and social changes (e.g. anti-doping education, socialization and extreme sports, sociocultural phenomena and their impact on sports and physical activity, physical activity in relation to science and technology), Sport Psychology and Sport Nutrition. We believe that although each member has a unique expertise, they also provide complementary expertise to the programme.

With regards to research related to rehabilitation injuries, members of the academic team work on the following research projects:

- a) Peak isokinetic torques of football players participating in different levels in Cyprus and lower limb asymmetries (publication in the Journal of Sports Science 2017 (5): 250-255. doi: 10.17265/2332-7839/2017.05.003).

- b) The effects of isokinetic training on the stability of the knee joint after ACL reconstruction. This project is performed in collaboration with PROGNOSIS Diagnostic Centre, Larnaca, Cyprus.
- c) The rate, the causes and the reoccurrence rate of ACL tear in Cyprus. This project is in collaboration with a series of orthopedic clinics in Larnaca area.
- d) Core fitness in college students and the association to low back pain.
- e) Assessment of trunk strength and low back pain in recreational college students and the effects of a four week isokinetic training intervention: A review of different testing procedures.
- f) The effects of Rheumatoid arthritis on physical performance, and wellbeing of recreational athletes and the use of alternative therapeutic modalities of treatment.

In addition to the team's current research projects, with the inclusion in the team of an Orthopaedic Surgeon who specialises in orthopaedic trauma and trauma rehabilitation, there is a lot of potential for the start of new interdisciplinary projects, as such expertise can bring a unique flavour to the Sport and Exercise research field as well as access to additional populations, especially with regards to rehabilitation.

Moreover, the team has recently established a research partnership with Prognosis Advanced Diagnostic Center. The Center, was founded in 2009 with the mission to provide exceptional diagnostic imaging quality and to exceed both patient and physician expectations for service and patient care. Recently, the centre was certified with the ISO9001:2015 quality standard proving its continuous commitment to the initial mission. Prognosis has a full set of diagnostic equipment ranging from advanced diagnostic modalities like MRI, CT and US to classical X-Ray department, Mammography and Bone-Densitometry (DEXA). The personnel employed within the centre is highly educated and continuously expands its knowledge horizons, always trying to keep up with the continuously evolving sector of clinical diagnostic imaging. Through the partnership with this diagnostic Centre, the team has already started exploring the possibility of different collaborative research projects related to rehabilitation, taking advantage of the Center's advanced imaging equipment. A collaborative research proposal for external funding was recently submitted (outcome still pending). The main collaborator on behalf of Prognosis Diagnostic Centre is Dr Stelios Angeli, a research active medical physicist (CV included in Appendix B).

**3. "A clearer set of modules related to either exercise (clinical) or sports related rehabilitation therapy. A potential solution could be to have the electives specialised in either sport or exercise"**

**Response:** We agree with the committee's recommendation. Accordingly, we have updated the content of existing modules to reflect this. More specifically, the content and focus of XS4001, XS4002 and XS4003 have been updated. XS4003 now relates more to exercise and XS4001 and XS4002 to sports. The updated module descriptors for these modules are available in Appendix A.

We believe that this approach allows students to gain a deeper, more solid understanding of exercise as well as sports related rehabilitation therapy.

**4. "The intention to focus mainly on research within the program of study contradicts with the need for vocational and applied practice focus of the proposed Degree "**

**Response:** We want to clarify that our intention is not to focus mainly on research. We consider both, research as well vocational and applied practice, of significant importance for the programme. This is why, at its current form, the programme includes a good blend and balance of both. XS4000 (20 ECTS) is mostly focusing on research and XS4001 (5 ECTS), XS4002 (5 ECTS) and XS4003 (5 ECTS) are mostly focusing on applied practise. In addition, XS4301 (30 ECTS) combines both areas. Last but not least, XS4900 (30 ECTS), provides students with the opportunity to focus their work on the area of interest to them (i.e. place more emphasis on the research component or more emphasis on the practical component).

**5. " There is a clear need to add Psychology related contents to the Elective Modules in relation to the assessed and treated athlete/individual. Supporting students with tests and applications of Psychology related contents can also create a better expertise around the current rehabilitation needs"**

**Response:** We believe that Sports Psychology is an essential element for the assessment and treatment of athletes and individuals, especially with regards to their sport injury management, prevention and rehabilitation and their return to play. We agree with the committee's comment that this was not reflected satisfactory on the module descriptions, therefore the module descriptions of the relevant modules have been updated to clarify this. Appendix A includes the updated module descriptors (XS4001, XS4002 and XS4003).

It is also worth mentioning that our course academic team includes a certified Sports Psychologist who will be responsible for the delivery of the related material.

The University and the School of Sciences are considering the addition of MSc Sport and Exercise Sciences programme as a strategic development of their portfolio with a great research implications. The interdisciplinary research approach of the School is enhanced with areas related to Sport and Exercise Sciences though a series of collaborations with national organisations (Cyprus Sports Medicine Association, Cyprus Handball Federation, Cyprus Anti-Doping Authority, Cyprus Olympic Committee, Nautical Club Larnaca), Sports Academies and Professional Football Teams, as well as physiotherapy and rehabilitation centres, diagnostic radiology centre, etc. This will allow future graduates to better fit to the real work environment.

We would like to take this opportunity again to thank the external evaluation committee members for their valuable and constructive comments and suggestions towards enhancing the

MSc Sport and Exercise Sciences programme at UCLan Cyprus. We feel that we are fully equipped to grow the course and enhance the positioning of our School, UCLan Cyprus and Cyprus as international education hub.

We remain at your disposal for any further questions and clarifications, in relation to our responses.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Irene Polycarpou,  
Head of School of Sciences,

Dr Marcos Michaelides,  
Director of MSc Sport and Exercise Sciences