

Doc. 300.1.2

07.14.489.003

Higher Education Institution's Response

Conventional-face-to-face programme of study

Date: 6/6/24

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Frederick University
- **Campus:** Limassol
- **School:** School of Health Sciences
- **Department / Sector:** Department of Life and Health Science
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme

In Greek:

Επιστήμη της Ασκήσης, Αθλητισμός και Αποκατάσταση (3 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 180 ECTS, (PhD))

In English:

Exercise Science, Sport & Rehabilitation (3 academic years 180 ECTS), Doctorate (PhD)

Language(s) of instruction: English and Greek

- **Specializations (if any):**

In Greek:



In 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.300.3.1) 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 (Doc. 300.3.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

1. Additional for doctoral programmes

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 1.a. The panel felt it was important for staff within the department to think strategically about how supervisory teams were constructed. It is important that the most experienced, senior academics within the department are included within supervisory teams as this is more likely to ensure success. Moreover, it is also of importance to secure interaction with internationally well-recognized researchers (e.g. in Greece, but also beyond) in order to secure research excellence. Additionally, it is also important for the University to consider how early career researchers can develop and gain experience of the PhD supervision process, for example, initially brought into the team as a third supervisor when they have relevant expertise to a PhD project.

Department's Response:

We greatly value ECC's recommendations and recognize the importance of strategic planning in this area to ensure the success and excellence of our research efforts. We fully agree that including our most experienced and senior academics within supervisory teams is essential, therefore it is noted that, according to the Doctoral Studies Regulations of the University, at least one of the members of the doctoral student's Advisory Committee must be a senior faculty member in the rank of Professor or Associate Professor. The regulations allow for one of the members of the Advisory Committee to be a senior academic from another university in the research domain of the thesis of the student. Most of the existing PhD programs of the university already take advantage of this option. PhD student co-supervision with faculty members from other universities is also possible through PhD cotutelle agreements. In addition to involving our senior academics, we acknowledge the critical importance of fostering interactions with internationally well-recognized researchers. Collaborations with esteemed researchers, both within Greece and globally, will undoubtedly elevate our research standards and expose our students to diverse perspectives and cutting-edge developments in their respective fields. For this purpose, we have already formed structured agreements with distinguished professors in the field of Physical Education and Sport Sciences and Rehabilitation as Research Advisors with particular focus on the PhD program whereas a preliminary list is presented in Annex 01. Additionally, we are actively profiling and reviewing

qualified CVs of distinguished researchers from around the world, including those from Greece and beyond. This initiative aims to ensure that our faculty and students have access to a diverse pool of expertise and perspectives. Moreover, with the commencement of our new program, we are committed to expanding our collaborations with highly esteemed international researchers and institutions, with the aim to actively seek further opportunities to establish and strengthen these international connections throughout domains of Exercise Sciences, Sport and Rehabilitation, thereby promoting research excellence and establishing our research profile. According to the Doctoral Studies Regulations of the University faculty members at the rank of the Lecturer are allowed to be the research advisors for PhD students, given that they have served for at least one year at the university. In such a case, another faculty member at a higher rank who has already successfully supervised at least one PhD student is a member of the research Advisory Committee acting as a co-supervisor. This condition is not required for the case of lower rank faculty members who have successfully supervised at least one PhD student in the past. Therefore, early career researchers (ECRs) have the opportunity to be research co-advisors and develop their supervisory skills. This approach not only supports ECRs in gaining valuable experience but also enriches the supervisory team with fresh insights and innovative ideas. We are committed to implementing these recommendations and will take concrete steps to ensure that our supervisory teams are strategically constructed. This will involve a careful assessment of the expertise and experience within our department, proactive engagement with international researchers, and a structured approach to integrating ECRs into the supervision process.

- 1.b. The panel felt that the department required a more consistent and clearer strategy regarding authorship on academic papers emanating from PhD projects. The panel recommends that the department follows the Vancouver guidelines. We noted that there was a requirement for PhD students to publish two research articles from their studies. Whilst we acknowledge that this is in-line with international standards, we do not believe it should be mandatory for PhD students at Frederick University. This is because the format of PhD studies can vary significantly across sports, exercise science and rehabilitation PhD projects. We would propose that individual evaluation

committees take a steer on what is appropriate for each PhD student on a case-by-case basis.

Department's Response:

We acknowledge the panel's recommendation to adopt a more consistent and clearer strategy regarding authorship on academic papers. We will take immediate steps to implement the Vancouver guidelines across the department to ensure transparency and fairness in authorship decisions. The adoption of these guidelines will provide a well-defined framework, ensuring that all contributions to research work are appropriately recognized fostering an ethical research environment. We would like to note that Frederick University has an Intellectual Property Policy that is publicly available at our website. The IP policy covers aspects relating to attribution of copyrights to authors as well acknowledgement of moral rights. Furthermore, in terms of authorship, our RDI Rules (article 13 on Research Ethics & Integrity), adopt and apply the "European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" (ECCRI), which has specific guidelines on authorship and reviewing (articles 2.7 and 2.8). Therefore, although we believe that the adopted ECCRI guidelines cover the ethics and integrity requirements on authorship, we acknowledge the flagged need for more specific guidelines to be adopted by the Life and Health Sciences Department that deals with medical related research and publications, thus we are adopting the recommendation to enhance our policies with the Vancouver Guidelines (ICMJE) which are more tailored to medical related research publications. Regarding the publication requirement for PhD students, we understand the panel's concern about the mandatory nature of publishing two research articles. We recognize that the nature and scope of PhD projects can vary significantly within our department, encompassing diverse fields such as sports, exercise science, and rehabilitation. However, this is a mandatory requirement for PhD programs and corresponds to the University's regulations across all PhD programs of study. To maintain quality of research publications and support PhD students in achieving their publication goals, we provide enhanced guidance and resources, including workshops on scientific writing, publication ethics, and navigating the peer-review process. Mentorship from experienced faculty members will be emphasized to help students develop high-quality research outputs.



1.c. The panel felt it would be helpful for the University of Frederick to consider a modification to how annual PhD monitoring and progress meetings are conducted. We felt it may be helpful to involve an independent chair (i.e. someone who is completely independent to the PhD project), to chair the annual progress meetings (involving senior academics within the institution). We felt this was more likely to help in each students' annual progress and may identify any potential "red flags" to PhD progress so any remedial support can be provided at an earlier juncture.

Department's Response:

We appreciate your suggestion to involve an independent chair in the annual PhD monitoring and progress meetings. We understand the importance of having an unbiased perspective in these evaluations, and we agree that an independent chair could enhance the objectivity of the progress assessments. However, one of the Advisory Committee's duties is to ensure the quality of the PhD progress and aids to facilitate the early identification of potential issues. It is noted that the program is structured with courses related to specific activities or requirements for the award of the PhD title to successful students. Such activities or requirements are the attendance of doctoral level courses, the PhD Qualifying Exam and the Research Proposal that constitute the preparatory level of the program. A student can register in the course that corresponds to the Research Proposal after successfully completing the PhD Qualifying exam. A student can progress to the research level after completing the requirements of the courses/activities in the preparatory level. Successful completion of each program requirement is achieved by a obtaining a Pass grade in the courses corresponding to each activity or program requirement. Grading of these courses is the collective responsibility of the student's Advisory Committee. Additionally, the doctoral students progress across their PhD studies is also monitored by the Doctoral Committee of the Senate, ensuring that students receive timely and appropriate support. We believe this actions are in line with your recommendations and ensure quality assurance into our current monitoring process of the PhD program. Our aim is to continuously improve our program to support our PhD candidates effectively throughout their academic journey.



1.d. The panel felt that a PhD program was a logical next step in the development of the department. This will increase and enhance research activities within the department and will naturally increase research capacity and output. Increasing the critical mass of leading researchers within the department is an important part of its natural growth and development. The panel was convinced that the proposed PhD program was required to help grow research activities within the department.

Department's Response:

We appreciate that ECC's views this initiative as a logical and essential step in enhancing our research activities and increasing our research capacity and output. We share your belief that increasing the critical mass of leading researchers is crucial for the department's growth and development. The proposed PhD program will play a significant role in achieving this goal, and we are committed to its successful implementation. Your support and conviction in our plans are greatly appreciated, and we look forward to the positive impact this program will have on our research accomplishments.



2. Conclusions and final remarks

2.a. We would like to thank the department for very fruitful and helpful discussions regarding the revalidation of the Bachelor (BSc) program in Physical Education and Sports Sciences. We fully agree that this programme has been a success over the past 5 years and we fully support that the program should continue.

We would also like to commend the ambition of the department in its proposal to offer a new PhD in Exercise Science, Sport & Rehabilitation program for suitable candidates. The panel believes that offering such a program is a logical next step in the department's development. However, we have made some recommendations above which we believe will be helpful to improve the overall offering of the PhD program.

Overall, the panel is fully supportive of the reaccreditation of the Bachelor program in Physical Education and Sports Science and the newly proposed PhD program in Exercise Science, Sport & Rehabilitation and suggest that they be implemented as soon as possible to add to the department's portfolio of programs.

Department's Response:

Thank you for your comprehensive evaluation and supportive feedback regarding the reaccreditation of our BSc program in Physical Education and Sports Sciences. We greatly appreciate your acknowledgment of the program's success over the past five years and your endorsement of its continuation.

Your commendation of our department's ambition in proposing a new PhD program in Exercise Science, Sport & Rehabilitation is encouraging. We concur that such a program aligns well with our department's research strategy. Your recommendations for enhancing the proposed PhD program are duly noted, and we will carefully consider them to ensure the overall quality and effectiveness of the offering.

In light of your supportive stance, we are committed to continue the offering of the reaccredited BSc program in Physical Education and Sports Sciences and promptly implementing the introduction of the new PhD program in Exercise Science, Sport & Rehabilitation. These additions will undoubtedly enrich our department's portfolio of programs, and we look forward to their positive impact on our academic community.



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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION





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B. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
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Prof. George Demosthenous Rector

Date: 07/06/2024

