

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 16.05.2024

Higher Education Institution's Response

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

- **Town:** Limassol

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

In Greek:

Εκπαιδευτική Ψυχολογία (1,5 έτη, 90 ECTS,
(Μεταπτυχιακό), εξ αποστάσεως)

- **In English: Educational Psychology (1,5 years, 90 ECTS, (MSc), E-learning)**

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek and English

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):** N/A

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



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 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

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 or 300.1.1/1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 2nd column of each table, the HEI must respond on the following:*
 - *the areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The institution should respond to the EEC comments, in the designated area next each comment. The comments of the EEC should be copied from the EEC report **without any interference** in the content.*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on separate document(s). Each document should be in *.pdf format and named as annex1, annex2, etc.*

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Some of the courses could usefully be renamed (e.g., Introduction to Educational Psychology → Psychology for Education; Learning Difficulties → Learning and Learning Difficulties). This takes into account that the course is at Masters level.</p>	<p>We have renamed "Introduction to Educational Psychology" as "Psychology for Education," and "Learning Difficulties" has been renamed to "Learning and Learning Difficulties" (See revised Study Guide in Annex 11). These adjustments enhance the clarity and relevance of our courses.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>The department clearly wishes to attract a broad range of students. While this is laudable, they might want to offer relevant courses from the BSc as induction material for those without backgrounds in Psychology or Education.</p>	<p>We find this comment extremely helpful and will proceed with its practical implementation as soon as our BSc in Psychology (Distance Learning) under development is completed and passes accreditation. This will help us increase our student pool (when the number of faculty staff will increase appropriately to accommodate higher student intake) by attracting students from diverse backgrounds. In the meanwhile, we will restrict our intake to students with background in Psychology, Education and other related programs.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>The research dissertation is weighted at 10 ECTS, which is low compared to a typical 90-credit European Masters. A resolution to this issue would be to combine aspects of Research Methods/General Skills with the dissertation, resulting in a more substantial dissertation course starting in S2.</p>	<p>We have redistributed the ECTS as follows: (a) as suggested we combined aspects of Research Methods and Statistical Analyses in Psychology to create two courses that will cultivate research knowledge and culture for both qualitative and quantitative methods and facilitate our students to carry out their Research Project in S3. These courses are "Qualitative Research Methods & Analysis" and "Quantitative Research Methods & Statistical Analysis". This means that students start preparing for their research project from Semester 1 (b) In S3 students will undertake the course "Research Project I:</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>Development of Critical Thinking and Literature Review" (5 ECTS), focusing on critical evaluation of sources and available evidence and the development of a literature review assignment. (c) In S3 Students will also undertake 'Research Study II: Data collection, analysis, and presentation,' which it is augmented to 15 ECTS (see revised Study Guide in Annex 11) This doubles the total weight of the dissertation and brings it more in synch with typical standards for European Masters.</p>	
<p>Qualitative Research Methods are important in Educational Psychology and should be covered in the program, perhaps through a standalone course.</p>	<p>Following from the previous point, to address this issue, we have created a standalone course in S1 on "Qualitative Research Methods and Statistical Analysis" which retains relevant information from the previous "Research Methods" course and covers additional themes on Sampling methods, Strategies, Data Collection and Analysis of Qualitative data (see revised Study Guide in Annex 11). We believe that this adjustment addresses the needs and interests of all students, equipping them with an equally comprehensive understanding of both qualitative and quantitative methods during the course of their MSc in Educational Psychology.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

2. Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment
 (ESG 1.3)

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<p>It is important to note that despite the fact that the Master's programme refers to the needs of the educational system for educational psychologists, the programme does not include</p>	<p>This is indeed a very important clarification that will be made to all prospective students through various means of communication (i.e. website, flyers etc) before they embark on this educational journey with us.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>an internship, and therefore does not lead to obtaining a professional license.</p>		
<p>Although the university has declared an AI use policy, it is recommended that the course descriptions include how students can or cannot incorporate AI into their activities.</p>	<p>This is a valid comment that will allow UoL to be on the same page regarding AI policies with other reputable universities internationally. To this end, a summary of the policy will be included on our online platform and for each submitted assignment students will be asked to fill in a declaration form if and how Generative AI was used (see Annex 10)</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

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<p>The ambitious plans for student recruitment (admitting 170 students to two programs, one of which is taught online in two languages, and both of which might require courses to be repeated across semesters, all this taught by 8–10 people) will threaten the highly valued aim to safeguard work-life balance.</p>	<p>We would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive criticism of our ambitious plans. In response, we are reevaluating our student intake strategy to ensure it aligns with our department's mission to establish a strong research reputation. Specifically, we will start small by recruiting a single cohort of 30 students in the Fall semester for the MSc in Educational Psychology in the Greek language only. In the meantime, we have hired one additional member of staff (see Annex 3) with related expertise to start in September 2024. This adjustment aims to safeguard the highly valued goal of maintaining a healthy work-life balance for all faculty members.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Also, the rapid ramping up of student numbers is incompatible with the clear mission of the department to make a name for itself in research. No member of such a small team will be</p>	<p>As pointed out in the previous comment, we have reconsidered our strategy and we have prioritized maintaining manageable student-to-faculty ratios (6.25:1) to support our faculty members in preserving their research focus and activities.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>able to remain research active under such a load.</p>		
<p>In connection with this, it is imperative that the teaching load is modelled more accurately and not just in terms of contact hours. It takes around 10 hours to prepare a new hour-long lecture; it takes around 2 to revise it for delivery in subsequent years. It takes around an hour to mark 3,000 words of student coursework. Without factoring these numbers in, there is no way to realistically honour the contracts academic staff have signed, which specify the percentage of their time that will be devoted to teaching.</p>	<p>Thank you for highlighting the importance of accurately modeling the teaching load, considering not just contact hours but also preparation and grading time. We have created a framework for Teaching Load Calculation (See Annex 2). These actions described in the framework will allow the University of Limassol to honor the contracts academic staff have signed, ensure the high quality of their teaching and research endeavors, and promote a healthy work-life balance.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>There is no clear plan for how teaching staff recruitment will proceed. Reference is made to filling the needs of teaching with part-time teaching staff.</p>	<p>We acknowledge the importance of having a clear plan for teaching staff recruitment. Consequently, we are have proceeded with one new hire for September 2024 (See Annex 3) and at least one more new hire for full-time faculty to start in 2025. With increased student intakes the following academic years, we plan to hire a minimum of two additional full-time faculty in 2026 and two more in 2027 to meet our teaching requirements. In addition, some requirements (up to 30% of the classes) could be taught by Special Teaching Faculty (STF). The Department has already established a Roster of highly qualified STF that can be utilised in the future, as the need arises.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>There is a need for diversity in teaching staff specialties, so that current members of the department are not forced to teach courses outside of their research and clinical interests and expertise.</p>	<p>We agree that aligning teaching assignments with corresponding research experience, clinical interests and relevant expertise of our faculty members is crucial for maintaining high-quality instruction. Currently, our existing teaching staff have been assigned courses based on their specific areas of expertise and research interests. Moving forward, we are prioritizing recruitment of additional teaching</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	staff with diverse specialties to ensure effective coverage of all areas in Psychology.	
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

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The minimum required score for English proficiency is at the lower end compared the requirements to be admitted in English-language master programmes in other European universities (i.e. IELTS 5.5). It is more common to require a minimum IELTS score of 6.5 (or higher).	We understand the importance of maintaining high standards for English proficiency in our program. For English-taught programs we have revised upward our English proficiency requirements to 6+ to ensure they align more closely with those of other reputable European universities offering English-language master's programs. For programs in the Greek language we kept it at 5.5, as all activities and requirements (except reading peer-reviewed journal articles) will be in Greek.	Choose level of compliance:
The EEC has some concerns about the very broad admission criteria, with possible access by students from very different backgrounds. It will be important to provide opportunities to catch up with some course content to students who lack basic knowledge (e.g., in core psychology disciplines, research methods or statistics). The department may consider building a preparatory programme using courses from the BSc programme.	We appreciate the suggestion and will be taking it onboard in the near future, upon the introduction of a distance learning BSc in Psychology. In line with attracting students from diverse backgrounds interested in gaining an in-depth understanding and knowledge of educational psychology, we will consider offering relevant BSc courses as induction material for those without backgrounds in Psychology or Education. However, for the very first intake we will aim to admit students with relevant background to ensure a smooth start of our MSc in Educational Psychology.	Choose level of compliance:
In terms of student progression, it is highly unusual to deduct credits when a student's studies are interrupted. The EEC recommends to revisit this rule.	We have reconsidered our policy to bring it in line with international standards and we will no longer be deducting credits due to interruption of studies (see Annex 9).	Choose level of compliance:

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

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There is a single welfare officer who appears to support students and staff, develop workshops/psychoeducation, ensure reasonable adjustments for learning and emotional difficulties, and provide one-to-one support sessions. Although the university remains small, there is a risk that one person can't handle such a workload effectively.	We recognize the diverse range of responsibilities the welfare officer undertakes to support both students and staff. Our University is currently very small, but we have put in place a plan, as it grows larger, to hire additional staff to maintain a high-quality services and a realistic workload for our welfare officer(s). We plan the hiring of a second welfare officer by the start of academic year 2025-26.	Choose level of compliance:

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

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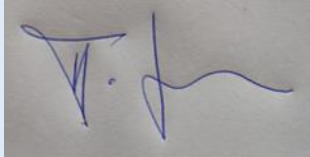

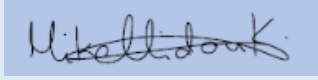

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and Final Remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>This programme is part of a rapid expansion by UoL into online learning, supported by a newly established Distance Learning Unit. Detailed course descriptions have been written; a Moodle-based learning infrastructure is in development; and the University is already offering detailed guides on Distance Learning and Assessment to staff. This is a supportive environment in which the Psychology staff can develop an online MSc.</p>	<p>Thank you for your positive comment. We dedicated a great amount of effort and time to ensure that UoL can offer top-quality education for distance learning students and a seamless experience for our faculty. The Psychology Department looks forward to leveraging these resources to ensure the quality and effectiveness of our online education initiatives.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>As we have indicated in our report on the department, our chief concern is that rolling out the MSc in two languages, with two start dates, in a year in which a BSc is already being started may affect the staff, adversely affecting their capacity to research and also their work-life balance. With a more cautious roll-out plan (starting for example with one intake in one language in the first academic year), staff will also be able to address some of the issues we have identified in this report, ensuring the long-lasting success of the programme.</p>	<p>We understand the potential impact on staff workload, research capacity, and work-life balance. Considering this feedback, we adopted a more cautious rollout plan, that is, starting with a single intake in one language (i.e., Greek) in the first academic year, fully addressing these EEC concerns effectively. This approach would allow staff to address identified issues and ensure the long-term success of the program.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Chief among the issues we have noted is the light weight of the dissertation compared to the European norm. This appears to be in part because the designers of the programme wish to serve two distinct constituencies: Those interested in continuing professional development (CPD),</p>	<p>We thank the reviewers for their comment and suggestion. The proposed solution including a CPD will not be attractive to potential students, so we have opted for a different solution. To tackle this issue, we have increased the total amount of ECTS for the research study to 20 (from the previous 10). Specifically, the course</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>who may have little stomach for a large-scale research project, and those whose ambitions tend towards research and perhaps PhD study. We have made some suggestions in section, but a more radical suggestion would be to consider two routes: For example, a 60-credit CPD Diploma with an optional 30-credit research training and dissertation leading to a Masters. This would have the additional benefit that the staff would not need to supervise so many dissertations.</p>	<p>“Development of Critical Thinking” has been revised to “Research Study I: Critical Thinking and Literature Review” and weighs 5 ECTS, while what was originally “Research Study” is now “Research Study II: Data collection, analysis and presentation”. We believe that this intermediate solution makes our course comparable with other postgraduate courses of international caliber and also remains an attractive option for those not wishing to embark on a PhD journey (see modified curriculum in Annex 11).</p>	
<p>Insofar as research is taken seriously in the department and in the master’s programme, it is important to properly introduce qualitative methods, as well as quantitative methods. In many departments qualitative methods would constitute a course on their own; at any rate they deserve more than the single lecture that has currently been allocated.</p>	<p>We appreciate this suggestion and fully agree with it. As commented in Section 1, we have restructured the material for the courses “Research Methods in Psychology” and “Statistical Analyses in Psychology” into “Qualitative Research Methods and Analysis” and Quantitative Research Methods and Statistical Analysis” (see Annex 11). This change in names and course content addresses the needs and interests of all students, equipping them with a more comprehensive understanding of the various methodologies employed in educational psychology research. We firmly believe that this action has elevated the quality of our MSc, and we thank the reviewers for the suggestion.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>A final consideration concerns the recruitment of students from diverse backgrounds. One way to support this would be to offer relevant courses from the BSc as induction material to those without Psychology or Education backgrounds.</p>	<p>As mentioned in Sections 1 and 4, we will consider offering relevant BSc courses as induction material for those without backgrounds in Psychology or Education, as soon as we roll out a distance learning BSc in Psychology. However, for the very first intake we will aim to admit students with some relevant background to ensure a smooth start of our MSc in Educational Psychology.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>Many pieces are in place for this to become an excellent online Masters, catering to a wide range of potential students.</p> <p>Once again, our major concern is the speed with which it is being rolled out by a relatively small academic staff in tandem with other projects. As we have said elsewhere, we were very impressed with the staff that we met. It is tempting to suggest that if anyone can pull off such a Herculean feat, they can, but at risk to their research activity, which will ultimately affect the department's reputation and ability to recruit high-calibre students to its programmes.</p> <p>Equally, a slower start will allow the department time to consider some tweaks to the programme, perhaps in line with our suggestions, for its improvement.</p>	<p>Thank you for recognizing the potential of our distance learning master's program and for acknowledging the dedication of our academic staff. We are honored to receive your detailed commentary and constructive criticism and hosting you during the accreditation day. Based on your feedback we are now implementing a slower roll-out, one that will ensure the highest quality of academic teaching and the longevity of the program and consequently the success of our faculty and Department as a whole. We are also proceeding immediately with an additional hire starting in September 2024 (see Annex 3) and made plans for further hiring in 2025-26.</p>	
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Theodore Panayotou	Rector	
Vasilis Polimenis	Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance	
Doron Sonsino	Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities School	
Kyriaki Mikellidou	Vice-Chair of the Department	
Veronica Georgiades	Academic Affairs Manager	
Andreas Mathikolonis	President of Student Council	Andreas Mathikolonis

Date: 07.06.2024

