

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 13.03.2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**

University of Limassol

- **Town:** Limassol

- **Programme of study**

Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα στην Ειδική Αγωγή και Νέες Τεχνολογίες (1.5 yrs 90 ECTS or 2 yrs 120 ECTS)

In English:

MEd in Special Education and New Technologies (1.5 yrs 90 ECTS or 2 yrs 120 ECTS)

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

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

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
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<p>Stakeholders are clearly involved through formats of exchange and cooperation, however currently in less formalised ways.</p>	<p>Here are some ways we involve our stakeholders:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Established formal stakeholder engagement mechanisms. Our stakeholders participate in our advisory boards, committees for curriculum review, research collaboration, industry partnerships with diverse stakeholder participation and annual consultations. 2. Partnerships with schools and other educational institutions. We have developed school-university partnerships to align teacher education programmes with real classroom needs. We have also established student teaching collaborations with schools to provide hands-on training for future educators (see Annex 1). 3. Enhanced stakeholders' involvement by encouraging them to participate in guest lectures, workshops, and advisory roles. We have already scheduled a series of guest lectures in our existing modules of Spring semester for the MSc in Educational Leadership. 4. Actively engaging policymakers and government Agencies, by establishing formal collaborations with pedagogical institutions to ensure alignment with national education policies. We have close collaboration with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, and two of these members were present during the accreditation meeting. Our stakeholders are involved in departmental forums, conferences, workshops and public events. 5. Using digital tools for stakeholder engagement such as the online University stakeholder feedback form (see Annex 2) to encourage constructive feedback and allows for ongoing engagement with our stakeholders. We are also using social media, newsletters, and webinars to maintain continuous communication and engagement. 	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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<p>Learning objectives are clearly defined, and are explicitly related to different fields of research and practice, thereby following the institutional strategy of firmly integrating research and teaching. The matching of learning objectives and teaching methodologies within each course as well as the usage of teaching methodologies across courses is mapped only to a limited extent.</p>	<p>Thank you for this suggestion. In response to your comment, a pre teaching planning meeting was scheduled to coordinate the teaching methodologies and activities of our modules so we can avoid repetition. During this meeting we mapped the learning objectives of the Master's course to the teaching methodologies.</p> <p>See Annex 3</p> <p>We have also mapped the usage of teaching methodologies across the different modules of the Master. This mapping ensures that different methodologies are used across modules, enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes through diverse pedagogical approaches.</p> <p>See Annex 4</p> <p>The mapping process will be revised and updated regularly based on students' feedback and instructors' expertise and experiences.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Students' involvement in quality assurance could be expanded beyond student evaluations of courses, for example in having student representatives in (some of the) Programme committee meetings.</p>	<p>Formal student representation is established as described in the university's charter document which focuses on the creation of student advisory committees that provide feedback on curriculum development, teaching methods, and department policies (see Annex 5 pages 19, 20, 21, 39).</p> <p>We have fostered a stronger departmental Community by organising regular student-faculty networking events, roundtable discussions, and informal gatherings.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Clearer procedures are recommended regarding stakeholders' involvement in quality assurance, for example by assigning to them clearer roles regarding programme review, learning objectives and teaching contents and methodologies, etc. This needs to be done in balanced ways as to not overburden stakeholders with tasks beyond</p>	<p>Our stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance procedures of our Department of Education to ensure that programmes remain relevant, responsive, and impactful. We have established formal stakeholder engagement mechanisms by asking them to participate in our advisory boards, committees for curriculum review, research collaboration, industry</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>their own professional responsibilities.</p>	<p>partnerships with diverse stakeholder participation and annual consultations.</p> <p>To ensure a balance on the stakeholders' engagement and input on our programmes, we organise these meetings to happen on a termly basis. We are also using digital tools for stakeholder engagement such as the online University stakeholder feedback form (see Annex 2) to encourage constructive feedback and allows for ongoing engagement with our stakeholders. We are also using social media, newsletters, and webinars to maintain continuous communication and engagement.</p>	
<p>Given the awareness and expertise of learning objectives and teaching methodologies among management and staff, it is recommended to systematically map these within and across courses so that it becomes more visible how learning objectives and teaching methodologies match, and how the range of different teaching methodologies spreads across individual courses in order to provide a diversity of methodologies to the students throughout the programme.</p>	<p>Thank you for this suggestion. In response to your comment, a pre teaching planning meeting was scheduled to coordinate the teaching methodologies and activities of our modules so we can avoid repetition. During this meeting we mapped the learning objectives of the Master's course to the teaching methodologies.</p> <p>See Annex 3</p> <p>We have also mapped the usage of teaching methodologies across the different modules of the Master. This mapping ensures that different methodologies are used across modules, enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes through diverse pedagogical approaches.</p> <p>See Annex 4</p> <p>The mapping process will be revised and updated regularly based on students' feedback and instructors' expertise and experiences.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Given the awareness of the challenges emanating from GenAI, it is recommended to integrate the process of text production/academic writing more systematically into course work to be done by the students. Measures such as writing logs, mutual peer-review of work in progress, uploading work in progress as well</p>	<p>Thank you for this valuable recommendation. Instilling the joy of writing in an era where GenAI is readily available but it requires a balance between leveraging it as a tool and fostering authentic creativity. Some practical uses we are employing are the following:</p>	

<p>as reflections on how to build on this work could be used to adequately address these challenges; as well as measures to instill joy in creating and writing.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We focus on writing as a creative process by emphasising the joy of discovery, personal expression and storytelling as activities to our modules. This can also be used as reflective writing or a form of freewriting which allows students to explore their thoughts. 2. Currently using AI as a writing companion, and not a replacement where we ask students to use AI for brainstorming and idea generation. 3. Encourage experimentation with style and voice by helping students to find their unique voice by experimenting with different styles of writing (e.g. have students write in different voices such as writing a scene from the perspective of a child, then a detective, then a historian). 4. Cultivate a culture of writing for an audience, by asking students to know that their work will be read by real people. We found that this way students care more for their writing, as we may then ask them to publish their work on the University's blog. 	
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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The University applies a completely asynchronous e-learning approach. This allows more freedom for the students, but it also raises questions regarding the pedagogy as this also allows for space for students to avoid live interactions with peers and teachers. As such, it is unclear why a combination of synchronous and asynchronous was not applied. Stemming from the fully asynchronous mode, additional issues of accurate and fair assessment and overall student engagement and well-being can be raised.	<p>Our distance learning approach uses a combination of asynchronous and synchronous e-learning approaches and modes of delivery. This is the policy we follow so far for all of our distance learning programmes. This is evident in our pedagogical framework of our Distance Learning programs (see Annex 6). We strongly believe that this combination provides flexibility for students to learn at their own pace while also enabling real-time interaction, collaboration, and immediate feedback. This approach enhances engagement, supports diverse learning styles, and fosters a sense of community despite physical distance.</p> <p>See below the synchronous activities that we apply across our modules:</p> <p><u>Live synchronous lectures:</u> Instructors should deliver at least six real-time lectures per semester for each module with opportunities for student participation and interactions and Q&A.</p> <p><u>Live webinars:</u> The Distance Learning Unit organises synchronous webinars for distance learning students in different topics, from distance education pedagogy and Instructional Design to the use of AI and other technical aspects of distance education.</p> <p><u>Virtual office hours:</u> Scheduled video calls where students can ask questions and receive immediate feedback from instructors.</p> <p><u>Group discussions:</u> Live sessions where students critically analyse course topics through structured discussions.</p> <p><u>Collaborative projects:</u> Real-time teamwork opportunities using breakout rooms in video conferencing platforms to complete assignments and activities.</p> <p><u>Guest speaker sessions:</u> Live talks from experts followed by interactive Q&A sessions.</p> <p><u>Case study analysis:</u> Instructor-led or peer-led analysis of real-world scenarios in a structured live discussion.</p> <p><u>Peer teaching and presentations:</u> Students present research or projects to their peers in a live session.</p> <p><u>Live polls and quizzes:</u> Interactive tools used in synchronous sessions to enhance understanding and engagement.</p> <p><u>Networking and social events:</u> Virtual meetups or discussion circles to build professional connections among students.</p>	Choose level of compliance:
The courses include both individual and	Fairly assessing individual contributions within group work in a distance learning environment can be challenging, but	Choose level of compliance:

<p>collaborative learning activities, which is very good. Additional attention is needed by the teacher to fairly assess individual contributions within groupwork.</p>	<p>we have some strategies in place that instructors should integrate in their courses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Establish clear expectations</u> We clearly define roles and responsibilities for each team member at the beginning of the project. We are using a grading rubric that includes both individual and group performance criteria. 2. <u>Peer evaluation form</u>. We ask students to assess each other's contributions using structured peer evaluation forms, ensuring anonymity to encourage honest feedback. 3. <u>Implement self-assessment</u>. Require students to submit a reflection on their contributions and the group's dynamics. 4. <u>Track contributions using technology</u>: We are using collaborative tools such as Google Docs and One Drive, that log individual contributions. We have also Moodle Analytics that tracks student interactions. 5. <u>We adjust grades based on individual 's contributions</u>. <p>See some templates we are using for group work in Annex 7.</p>	
<p>The DLU of the University offers an introductory session with the students, primarily on how to use the technology related to the e-learning aspects of the programme. Taking into account that the expected audience may be older, have no prior experience with online education, and have lower availability than a typical student in a conventional programme, additional guidance on what it means to be active and engaged in a distance learning programme is needed. The students can reach out to DLU for this kind of support, but it would be even better if the University was proactive and not reactive in this matter.</p>	<p>Thank you for your valuable feedback and observations regarding the support provided to our distance learning students. We would like to clarify that the Distance Learning Unit already offers a comprehensive and proactive support framework, designed to meet the needs of all students, including those who may be older, less familiar with eLearning education, or balancing multiple commitments.</p> <p>From the outset, all students are provided with access to our Student Help Center Page, which offers a rich collection of resources, including step-by-step guides, video tutorials, frequently asked questions, and practical tips specifically designed to help students navigate both the technological and academic aspects of online learning. These materials include guidance on time management, online participation, and strategies for staying engaged and motivated throughout the programme.</p> <p>In addition, our ticketing system is always available, ensuring that students can reach out at any time with concerns or questions. Our support team responds promptly (maximum 48 hours), offering personalised assistance to resolve technical issues and providing additional guidance where needed. See (https://www.uol.ac.cy/en/distance-learning-unit/)</p> <p>We also closely monitor student activity within the platform and proactively contact students who appear to be</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>disengaged, offering both technical and academic support to help them get back on track. This proactive approach has already proven effective, particularly for students who may be returning to education after a long period or managing professional and family responsibilities alongside their studies. In addition to the comprehensive guidance already provided through our Student Help Center Page, which offers detailed guides, video tutorials, and practical tips, and the ongoing personalised support offered through our ticketing system, we are also enhancing peer-to-peer support mechanisms across our distance learning programmes. See Annex 8.</p> <p>Specifically, starting in September, and following approval by the University Senate, we plan to introduce a peer mentoring scheme, where 2-3 experienced students per programme are designated as peer mentors. These mentors act as a first point of contact for new students, offering advice, sharing their experiences, and helping to foster a sense of community among learners. This initiative is particularly designed to support mature students and those with limited eLearning experience, providing them with practical, relatable guidance from peers who have successfully navigated similar challenges.</p> <p>This peer mentoring initiative will complement the existing proactive outreach from the Distance Learning Unit, where we already monitor student engagement and reach out directly to those who appear to be struggling, offering further support.</p>	
Regarding social development, the University is focusing primarily on creating knowledgeable learners, but more support is needed for social development. It appears that the students self-organize and create their own online groups (in other programmes which also have conventional aspects), but no specific method is used to enhance students' social interaction, apart from including groupwork and peer discussion in the courses.	<p>Besides including groupwork and peer discussion in the courses, we pay attention to social interaction between students using other methods or strategies such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>1. Virtual study groups and peer mentorship:</u> We assign students to study groups that meet regularly via video calls or chat forums in order to establish peer mentorship programs where experienced students help newer ones navigate the course. <u>2. Collaborative digital whiteboards and note-sharing:</u> We encourage the use of digital tools like Padlet, Miro, or Jamboard for brainstorming and sharing ideas in real-time. <u>3. Social media and informal communication channels:</u> We encourage the creation of a private group in social media (Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp or Slack) as a workspace for informal discussions. <u>4. Gamification and team challenges:</u> Instructors incorporate team-based games, trivia, or escape room challenges using Kahoot, Quizizz, or mentimeter or other digital tools. <u>5. Synchronous virtual cafés and networking sessions:</u> 	Choose level of compliance:

	<p>Alogside with the Student Union, we host, at least twice per semester, "virtual coffee breaks" or "dinner chats" where students can join casual, non-academic conversations.</p> <p><u>6. Cross-institution or international collaboration:</u> This is part of our cooperation framework with the University of West Attica. We assign students to work with international peers on research or problem-solving activities.</p>	
<p>The role of students in taking an active role in creating the e-learning process is not clear. However, the EEC also heard from students (of other programmes) and teachers that rubrics and deadlines are discussed with the students, which is a very positive element.</p>	<p>We have an established formal student representation as described in our university's charter document (see Annex 5) which focuses on the creation of student advisory committees that provide feedback on curriculum development, teaching methods, and department policies.</p> <p>Here are some methods we use to encourage student involvement:</p> <p><u>1. Students' feedback procedure.</u> Feedback mechanisms are already in place including regular student surveys on course quality, faculty performance, and overall student experience. We also implement a transparent system for responding to student concerns and demonstrating how feedback leads to improvements (e.g. 'You said, we did'). See the feedback evaluation form distributed to students twice during the semester. (see Annex 9)</p> <p><u>2. Student involvement in course design:</u> We conduct regular surveys (at least twice per semester) and feedback sessions to refine the curriculum based on student suggestions. Also, we allow students to choose optional modules, case studies, or research topics that align with their interests.</p> <p><u>3. Enhancing collaboration and communication:</u> We facilitate online groups for peer mentoring, group discussions, and collaborative projects. During our sessions, students can interact directly with faculty, industry experts, or alumnus.</p>	
<p>At programme level, it seems that there is an intention to analyze grading across courses and identify differences between teachers. This is a good step, but perhaps more is needed to guarantee objective and</p>	<p>Here are some methods and strategies that we implement:</p> <p>1. Assignment and thesis screening. We randomly reassess past student work once per academic year. 2. Clear and detailed rubrics to monitor and assess students' performance are used (see Annex 10). 3. Conduct regular calibration for instructors. We offer training to instructors and teaching assistants on grading norms. We also organise assessment moderation meetings to ensure consistent grading.</p>	

<p>consistent assessment throughout the programme. Assignment and thesis screening (i.e., randomly re- assess past student work by another teacher) is not employed</p>	<p>4. Program Committee. Each programme has programme coordinator who can monitor the grading process and discuss with instructors for possible adjustments or improvements.</p>	
<p>The teachers are trained by the DLU on technical and pedagogical aspects. This training lasts in total for 25 hours and an interested teacher may ask for more support and 1-on-1 sessions throughout the programme. In addition, there is a culture of co-designing the learning experiences taking into account both the learning design of the teacher and the suggestions from the DLU. It is mandatory for a teacher to send the learning design of a course to DLU. Finally, there are three guides (PDF documents) available for teachers on “Moodle Learning”, “Distance Learning”, and “Moodle Analytics for Instructors”. All the above are very positive elements of the programme. It would be further suggested that training be extended to cover more pedagogical aspects. As an indication, a mandatory teaching qualification certificate is required in many Northern European universities which includes 150 hours (5 EC) for the standard and 300 hours (10ECs) for the advanced certificate.</p>	<p>Beyond the standard 25-hour training mentioned in the accreditation meeting, we have organised a series of internal training sessions for all staff to cover all the pedagogical aspects for the distance education. The training series is organised in a workshop format. External and internal experts are invited to give the workshops. For example, all the staff should participate at least in three online workshops per academic year and then share their knowledge with others. In addition, other related seminars or workshops will be organised in the coming months as we proceed with our distance programmes.</p> <p>See below some of the topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The use of AI in distance education (GenAI tools for online education and integration practices). - How to avoid cheating in an online learning environment. - How to teach online effectively (considerations on distance education, theoretical underpinnings of online education, teaching methods, recent evolutions) - Interaction with students in an online environment (online communication techniques). - Students' engagement in an online course (tips to keep your students focused and engaged, digital tools for online courses, feedback, etc). - How to use Moodle Analytics for the online courses - Instructional Design (how to prepare your activities, etc). 	

<p>There is no explicit mapping on how the courses are going to address the intended learning outcomes. Many courses have similar descriptions of teaching methods. From the viewpoint of a student, it would be beneficial if the ways of teaching methods and assignments vary enough between the courses.</p>	<p>Thank you for this suggestion. In response to your comment, a pre teaching planning meeting was scheduled to coordinate the teaching methodologies and activities of our modules so we can avoid repetition. During this meeting we mapped the learning objectives of the Master's course to the teaching methodologies.</p> <p>See Annex 3</p> <p>We have also mapped the usage of teaching methodologies across the different modules of the Master so it is beneficial for the students. This mapping ensures that different methodologies are used across modules, enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes through diverse pedagogical approaches.</p> <p>See Annex 4</p> <p>The mapping process will be revised and updated regularly based on students' feedback and instructors' expertise and experiences.</p>	
<p>The main concern is based on the University's decision to apply a fully asynchronous mode of education. Distance education does not necessarily mean a fully asynchronous mode and, indeed, a combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities is the most common practice. Being fully asynchronous allows the students to opt out completely from synchronous student and teacher interaction. The argument that the interactive weekly activities (e.g., quizzes and assignments) will keep the students active is missing the point that human interaction (and not human-computer interaction) is not optional but mandatory in any kind</p>	<p>Our distance learning approach uses a combination of asynchronous and synchronous e-learning approaches and modes of delivery. This is the policy we follow so far for all of our distance learning programmes. This is evident in our pedagogical framework of our Distance Learning programs (see Annex 6). We strongly believe that this combination provides flexibility for students to learn at their own pace while also enabling real-time interaction, collaboration, and immediate feedback. This approach enhances engagement, supports diverse learning styles, and fosters a sense of community despite physical distance.</p> <p>See below the synchronous activities that we apply across our modules:</p> <p><u>Live synchronous lectures</u>: Instructors should deliver at least six real-time lectures per semester for each module with opportunities for student participation and interactions and Q&A.</p> <p><u>Live webinars</u>: The Distance Learning Unit organises synchronous webinars for distance learning students in different topics, from distance education pedagogy and Instructional Design to the use of AI and other technical aspects of distance education.</p> <p><u>Virtual office hours</u>: Scheduled video calls where students can ask questions and receive immediate feedback from instructors.</p>	

<p>of formal education. As such, it should not be possible for a student to completely skip all live interaction with the teacher, and perhaps with other students, and appear live only during the exams. This is not merely a point about the risk of cheating (which is nevertheless valid). EEC wants to underline the importance of social and soft skills that can only be developed via live interactions. As such, it is strongly advised that elements of the program will require the students to spend some time live with their teachers, either during the planned lectures or ad hoc consultation time during virtual office hours. In general, the teachers should also have a better understanding of their students' learning trajectories, special contexts, and individual differences before they see them during the exams. So, adding synchronous elements could also address this issue.</p>	<p><u>Group discussions:</u> Live sessions where students critically analyse course topics through structured discussions. <u>Collaborative projects:</u> Real-time teamwork opportunities using breakout rooms in video conferencing platforms to complete assignments and activities. <u>Guest speaker sessions:</u> Live talks from experts followed by interactive Q&A sessions. <u>Case study analysis:</u> Instructor-led or peer-led analysis of real-world scenarios in a structured live discussion. <u>Peer teaching and presentations:</u> Students present research or projects to their peers in a live session. <u>Live polls and quizzes:</u> Interactive tools used in synchronous sessions to enhance understanding and engagement. <u>Networking and social events:</u> Virtual meetups or discussion circles to build professional connections among students.</p>	
<p>In addition to the above, the University should have a mechanism in place to check up periodically with students who have indicators of lower engagement. Active students should complete the weekly assignments and attend synchronous online lectures and project meetings. Once a student stops being active in</p>	<p>Student engagement and active participation are considered essential components of the learning experience in all eLearning programmes. To ensure students remain actively engaged, we have established a structured process to systematically monitor student activity and participation within the LMS.</p> <p>Specifically, if a student does not access the LMS or fails to participate in at least two interactive activities, such as discussion forums, quizzes, or collaborative tasks, a proactive follow-up process is initiated. This allows us to identify and address any challenges the student may be</p>	

<p>weekly meetings or starts skipping synchronous interaction, the University should reach out and check with the student. This is not only related to academic achievement but also for the students' wellbeing. Being online means that there are higher chances of isolation and disengagement. Since the channel of communication in distance education is limited, the University must be proactive and set up a process to reach out to students. Students of other online programmes mentioned that they went completely offline for 3 weeks because of personal circumstances before the University contacted them. This was done in a case-based approach and a shorter period for reaction would be more productive.</p>	<p>facing, whether they are academic, technical, or personal in nature.</p> <p>We have also invested in training our academic and administrative staff on the effective use of Moodle Analytics (see Annex 11), a robust tool that enables instructors and programme teams to make data-informed decisions to enhance the learning experience.</p> <p><u>Roles and Responsibilities</u></p> <p>The primary responsibility for monitoring student engagement and participation lies with the instructor, working closely with the DLU. Instructors are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor student activity within the LMS regularly using available analytics tools. • Proactively contact students who are not meeting engagement expectations to offer support and guidance. • Work collaboratively with the DLU to provide technical assistance or additional learning resources, where needed. <p>If a student does not respond within a reasonable timeframe, the instructor escalates the case to the Administration Office, which will attempt to contact the student through official channels. Should these efforts prove unsuccessful, the matter is referred to the Student Welfare Office, while simultaneously informing the Programme Director to ensure all relevant stakeholders are aware.</p> <p>Once contact is re-established, all parties are notified, and the instructor, in consultation with the DLU and the Student Welfare Office, works directly with the student to develop appropriate solutions that facilitate their successful re-engagement with the programme. This multi-layered, student-centred approach ensures that students receive timely, tailored support while reinforcing our commitment to delivering high-quality distance education, responsive student services, and continuous academic monitoring and enhancement.</p>	
<p>Pedagogical support is extremely useful for teachers and it is a great first step that the University has already planned training offered by DLU. Nevertheless, this training could be</p>	<p>Thank you for these valuable suggestions. We are constantly organising a series of internal training sessions for all staff to cover all the pedagogical aspects for the distance education. The training series is organising in a workshop format. External and internal experts are invited to give the workshops. For example, all the staff should participate in at least three online workshops per academic year and then share their knowledge with others. In addition, other related seminars or workshops will be</p>	

<p>extended. Especially for designing engaging learning activities online instructional models such as Keller's ARCS model (attention-relevance-confidence-satisfaction) could be useful as it offers a lot of practical examples. Similarly, training on curriculum mapping and constructive alignment (i.e., aligning learning goals with learning activities and assessment items) could be offered at a higher level, using, for example, Biggs and Tang's model for teaching for quality learning. Finally, supporting students' metacognitive development (e.g., setting up goals, monitoring, and reflection) and socially shared regulation (i.e., how to work productively in a group) would be useful for any programme, let alone a distance education one. These three aspects are typically included in teacher training programmes mentioned earlier. Finally, AI literacy should be supported for students and teachers.</p>	<p>organised in the coming months as we proceed with our distance programmes.</p> <p>See below some of the topics that were included in our plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructional Design techniques on how to design engaging learning activities. - Curriculum mapping and constructive alignment using specific models and strategies. - Supporting students' metacognitive development - AI literacy for education. DLU members have already registered to the following training and will train the staff afterwards. https://www.aiforeducation.io/train-the-trainer-institute-genai-literacy-trainer-essentials?ss_source=sscampaigns&ss_campaign_id=67bf38f4acff4a0f97bcd759&ss_email_id=67bf483ddf2f0909bd0bbd7b&ss_campaign_name=Become+a+GenAI+Literacy+Trainer&ss_campaign_sent_date=2025-02-26T16%3A58%3A42Z 	
<p>Grading objectivity could be enhanced by discussing grading strategies in planned teacher meetings, including multiple teachers (where possible) in grading one course, and implementing screening processes.</p>	<p>Here are some methods and strategies that we implement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assignment and thesis screening. We randomly reassess past student work once per academic year. 2. Clear and detailed rubrics to monitor and assess students' performance are used (see Annex 10). 3. Conduct regular calibration for instructors. We offer training to instructors and teaching assistants on grading norms. We also organise assessment moderation meetings to ensure consistent grading. 4. Program Committee. Each programme has a programme coordinator who can monitor the grading process and discuss with instructors for possible adjustments or improvements. 	

<p>The social development of students should be enhanced by organizing and facilitating social activities for the students online (e.g., online pub quizzes, online social clubs, etc.). This could enhance the sense of belonging and cohesion for the students.</p>	<p>Besides including groupwork and peer discussion in the courses, we pay attention to social interaction between students using other methods or strategies such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>1. Virtual study groups and peer mentorship:</u> We assign students to study groups that meet regularly via video calls or chat forums in order to establish peer mentorship programs where experienced students help newer ones navigate the course. <u>2. Collaborative digital whiteboards and note-sharing:</u> We encourage the use of digital tools like Padlet, Miro, or Jamboard for brainstorming and sharing ideas in real-time. <u>3. Social media and informal communication channels:</u> We encourage the creation of a private group in social media (Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp or Slack) as a workspace for informal discussions. <u>4. Gamification and team challenges:</u> Instructors incorporate team-based games, trivia, or escape room challenges using Kahoot, Quizizz, or mentimeter or other digital tools. <u>5. Synchronous virtual cafés and networking sessions:</u> Alongside with the Student Union, we host, at least twice per semester, "virtual coffee breaks" or "dinner chats" where students can join casual, non-academic conversations. <u>6. Cross-institution or international collaboration:</u> This is part of our cooperation framework with the University of West Attica. We assign students to work with international peers on research or problem-solving activities. 	
<p>Concerning practicum, it would be good to consider if students will get enough practical skills and expertise for their future work, if only visiting one place during their practicum. If it is for practical reasons a challenge to provide a wider perspective for the field of special education, then alternatively, it would be good to consider, if there are possibilities to include more field-related experiences for other courses, e.g., in form of stakeholders from different fields to give lectures and</p>	<p>Thank you for the great suggestions. We are implementing that in various ways offering to our students a variety of possibilities to acquire knowledge and skills in a wider perspective in the field of Special Education. The Practicum includes different ways of acquiring practical experiences before the practice in a specific field. Students need to attend conferences, webinars or workshops around Special Education and New Technologies and then select the field that would like to implement their practicum. There is also the possibility to choose more than one place of practicum if a student wants to develop skills in different subjects. Students can always discuss their practicum pathway with their mentors and co-design a tailored plan to their needs, interests and career aspirations.</p> <p>Also, in collaboration with our stakeholders we offer various practical experiences to our students across all the courses of the master program. We invite, for example, experts in the field to give lectures and discuss with our students interesting topics and trends in Special Education and New Technologies.</p>	



seminars related to their expertise.		
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3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
As e-learning methods and tools are constantly developing, and as a response to the TRF based on our discussions, we would encourage the faculty/department, together with the Distance learning unit, to provide continuous learning and training opportunities for the TRF, in order to keep the quality of the distance teaching excellent. This is especially important for the applied program, as it will be provided only online.	<p>A series of internal training sessions for all staff to cover all the pedagogical aspects for the distance education is organised by external and internal experts. For example, a training on 'how to teach, engage and assess students in distance education' took place and is also available on Moodle. See the training outline in Annex 12.</p> <p>Beyond this, all staff should participate in at least three online workshops per academic year and then share their knowledge with others. In addition, in the coming months as we proceed with our distance programmes, other related seminars or workshops are taking place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructional Design techniques on how to design engaging learning activities. - Curriculum mapping and constructive alignment using specific models and strategies. - Supporting students' metacognitive development. - AI literacy for education. DLU members have already registered to the following training and will train the staff afterwards. https://www.aiforeducation.io/train-the-trainer-institute-genai-literacy-trainer-essentials?ss_source=sscampaigns&ss_campaign_id=67bf38f4acff4a0f97bcd759&ss_email_id=67bf483ddf2f0909bd0bbd7b&ss_campaign_name=Become+a+GenAI+Literacy+Trainer&ss_campaign_sent_date=2025-02-26T16%3A58%3A42Z 	Choose level of compliance:
It is recommended that the faculty and the department carefully consider the substance and methodological expertise needed in the programme when it comes to new recruitments in the future. Combination of special education and new technologies is a wide field, so it is important that there are competent TRF members to cover all needed areas in the programme and curriculum.	Indeed, when it comes to new recruitments, we consider very carefully the substance and methodological expertise needed in the programme, paying particular attention to specific criteria in recruiting new faculty members for this programme. The expertise in Special Education and the knowledge of New Technologies are the main requirements together with other such as teaching experience in distance learning programmes, research publications, community outreach, etc. To ensure the quality of new faculty members we have already established an external committee, approved by the University Senate, that consists of three expert Professors from three different universities in the area of Special Education and New Technologies.	Choose level of compliance:



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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
No further recommendations were made by EEC.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Choose level of compliance:

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Goal setting, self-monitoring, learning portfolios, and other tools that would allow students to self-regulate are not currently used, but they are available in Moodle and could be easily part of students' learning experience.	<p>In collaboration with our Distance Learning Unit we offer to our students various opportunities and tools that are available in Moodle to allow students to self-regulate their learning pathway within the course. We inform students on the use of such tools in our induction training. These tools provide flexibility, autonomy, and opportunities for students to manage their progress effectively.</p> <p>1. <u>Activity completion and progress tracking:</u> Instructors set criteria for students to mark activities as complete (e.g., viewing, submitting, achieving a grade). Also, the progress bar and completion tracking helps students monitor their progress visually.</p> <p>2. <u>Conditional activities and restriction settings:</u> Activities and resources can be unlocked based on previous completion, ensuring structured progression. Also, the restrict access feature enables students to move through content at their own pace by unlocking resources based on conditions (e.g., grades, completion, dates).</p> <p>3. <u>Self-assessment and reflection tools:</u> Every week students complete quizzes with immediate feedback to understand and adjust their study plans. Students can also give us feedback through surveys in order to enable their self-reflection on learning progress and effectiveness.</p> <p>4. <u>Time management and notifications:</u> Our modules use calendar and event reminders to help students manage deadlines and plan their learning. Students can also personalise their dashboard to highlight important tasks.</p> <p>See Annex 8</p>	Choose level of compliance:
The teaching staff is largely appreciative of the University-wide culture that supports research and training. In general, the teaching staff feel supported, adding, of course, that more training would be even better.	<p>A series of internal training sessions for all staff to cover all the pedagogical aspects in Distance Education is organised. For example, a training on 'how to teach, engage and assess students in distance education' took place and is also available on Moodle. See the training programme outline in Annex 12.</p> <p>Beyond this, all staff should participate in at least three online workshops per academic year and then share their knowledge with others. In addition, in the coming months as we proceed with our distance programmes, other related seminars or workshops are taking place.</p>	Choose level of compliance:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructional Design techniques on how to design engaging learning activities. - Curriculum mapping and constructive alignment using specific models and strategies. - Supporting students' metacognitive development. - AI literacy for education. DLU members have already registered to the following training and will train the staff afterwards. https://www.aiforededucation.io/train-the-trainer-institute-genai-literacy-trainer-essentials?ss_source=sscampaigns&ss_campaign_id=67bf38f4acff4a0f97bcd759&ss_email_id=67bf483ddf2f0909bd0bbd7b&ss_campaign_name=Become+a+GenAI+Literacy+Trainer&ss_campaign_sent_date=2025-02-26T16%3A58%3A42Z <p>The University supports our professional development as they offer us a research allowance of 5000 euros, to participate in conferences, or purchase research or teaching equipment.</p>	
AI literacy and ethical and legal frameworks are still on the rise, but the University must be proactive in helping students and teachers dealing with it. Prompting users to explore without adequate knowledge or purpose may be counterproductive and allow for misconceptions on the use and purpose of AI and GenAI.	<p>As AI literacy and its ethical and legal frameworks continue to evolve, the university is aware, and has taken a proactive role in guiding both students and teachers in understanding and using AI responsibly. To address this, the university has bought in the following (GenAI Literacy Trainer Essentials):</p> <p>https://www.aiforededucation.io/train-the-trainer-institute-genai-literacy-trainer-essentials?ss_source=sscampaigns&ss_campaign_id=67bf38f4acff4a0f97bcd759&ss_email_id=67bf483ddf2f0909bd0bbd7b&ss_campaign_name=Become+a+GenAI+Literacy+Trainer&ss_campaign_sent_date=2025-02-26T16%3A58%3A42Z</p> <p>Training will be provided on how to be AI literated. This will then include workshops from the DLU team, guidelines, and ethical discussions, to ensure that AI tools are used transparently, critically, and effectively in academic and professional settings.</p> <p>Establishing clear policies and structured training will help foster responsible engagement with AI while preventing potential pitfalls, and then faculty members will instill this knowledge to their students too. This can be achieved by streamlined activities in our modules.</p> <p>We are already taking a structured approach that balances exploration with responsible use. This is achieved through AI literacy workshops, where students learn about AI's capabilities, limitations, and ethical concerns, alongside guidelines for responsible academic use. We have a clear</p>	Choose level of compliance:

	<p>AI policy that defines acceptable AI-assisted work, proper citation practices, and academic integrity is essential.</p> <p>See Annex 13</p>	
<p>The presented materials and the discussion stressed the importance of international networks and mobility, including some mobility (e.g. conference participation) beyond Erasmus exchange structures. There was provided limited detail regarding how the programme will be linked with plans of increasing international mobility.</p>	<p>Here is additional detail on how our programme will be linked with plans of increasing international mobility. As the course is currently offered in Greek, our first key action to internationalise the course is to identify our key recruitment demographic data by reaching out to some communities such as Expat Communities, Hellenic Societies and Cultural Centers, Cypriot embassies, Social media outreach and targeted advertising.</p> <p>Some things we already do and plan to expand further are the below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We promote collaboration with other institutions, (e.g. some are our stakeholders), which help with student internship, knowledge exchange. 2. Establish international exchange programmes, by partnering with foreign universities who will offer study-abroad semesters, or short exchange programmes. 3. In partnership with the UoL Research Centre we will also secure Erasmus+ funding and other mobility grants to support travel and living costs for our students starting with the very first cohort. 4. Integrate multilingual and cross-cultural training, which will allow us to offer courses in other languages or provide bilingual education modules. We are also planning to include comparative studies on the field from other countries to prepare our students for diverse teaching environments. 5. Align our teaching methodologies and activities with International Standards. By doing this we ensure the programme follows globally recognised frameworks, such as those from UNESCO. 6. International experts were invited as external speakers (e.g. guest lecturers, alumni students) on our current programmes and we are currently encouraging our students to participate in conferences. For example, our students in collaboration with some of our faculty plan to participate at the Panhellenic Student Conference on (Pre)School Pedagogy (https://1synped.conf.uoi.gr/). 	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>As more accessibility tools and options are becoming available, DLU is advised to keep track of recent advancements. For example, special font types such as Dyslexie have been developed and seem to be effective for students with dyslexia.</p>	<p>Thank you for your valuable suggestion regarding the use of additional accessibility tools. We would like to clarify that the University of Limassol has already implemented the premium version of accessiBe (https://accessibe.com/) within our Moodle platform, ensuring that our Distance Learning environment meets the highest accessibility standards.</p> <p>The premium version of accessiBe provides a comprehensive range of accessibility features, allowing all students — regardless of any disability — to customise their learning experience according to their individual needs. These features include font adjustments, spacing and contrast controls, screen reader compatibility, keyboard navigation enhancements, and more, ensuring full flexibility and support for diverse accessibility requirements.</p> <p>At the same time, we remain fully committed to accommodating any additional requests from students. Should any student require specific tools, such as Dyslexie font or other specialised solutions, we are fully open to evaluating these requests and ensuring they are accommodated wherever possible. This student-centered approach ensures that all learners, including those with specific learning difficulties, feel fully supported throughout their academic journey. Finally, the DLU continuously monitors advancements in the field of accessibility to ensure we remain at the forefront of inclusive online learning practices and can proactively respond to the evolving needs of our student body.</p> <p>See Annex 8</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Tools that would allow the students to create their learning space by creating, for example, their learning portfolio, learning goals, and timelines, could help them in self-regulation. Most of them are available in Moodle or free add-ons, so DLU could explore further in that direction.</p>	<p>In collaboration with our Distance Learning Unit we offer to our students various opportunities and tools that are available in Moodle to allow students to self-regulate their learning pathway within the course. We inform students on the use of such tools in our induction training. These tools provide flexibility, autonomy, and opportunities for students to manage their progress effectively.</p> <p>1. <u>Activity completion and progress tracking:</u> Instructors set criteria for students to mark activities as complete (e.g., viewing, submitting, achieving a grade). Also, the progress bar and completion tracking helps students monitor their progress visually.</p> <p>2. <u>Conditional activities and restriction settings:</u> Activities and resources can be unlocked based on previous completion, ensuring structured progression. Also, the restrict access feature enables students to move</p>	

	<p>through content at their own pace by unlocking resources based on conditions (e.g., grades, completion, dates).</p> <p>3. <u>Self-assessment and reflection tools:</u> Every week students complete quizzes with immediate feedback to understand and adjust their study plans. Students can also give us feedback through surveys in order to enable their self-reflection on learning progress and effectiveness.</p> <p>4. <u>Time management and notifications:</u> Our modules use calendar and event reminders to help students manage deadlines and plan their learning. Students can also personalise their dashboard to highlight important tasks.</p> <p>See Annex 8</p>	
<p>Further training on pedagogical issues is needed. These have already been mentioned in Section 2. In addition, AI literacy should be further supported. There are several AI ethics frameworks (e.g., UNESCO's Guidance for GenAI in Education and Research) which could be used university-wide for all programmes. In addition, the EU's AI Act which came into force on 1 Aug 2024 dictates the risk levels for different aspects of AI in education and training. DLU, and consequently, the teacher must be aware of what is permitted and what is not regarding the use of AI in education.</p>	<p>We are constantly organising a series of internal training sessions for all staff to cover all the pedagogical aspects of the distance education. The training series is organising in a workshop format. External and internal experts are invited to give the workshops. For example, all the staff should participate in three online workshops per academic year and then share their knowledge with others. In addition, other related seminars or workshops will be organised in the coming months as we proceed with our distance programs.</p> <p>See below some of the topics that included in our plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructional Design techniques on how to design engaging learning activities. - Curriculum mapping and constructive alignment using specific models and strategies. - Supporting students' metacognitive development <p>As AI literacy and its ethical and legal frameworks continue to evolve, the university is aware, and has taken a proactive role in guiding both students and teachers in understanding and using AI responsibly. To address this, the university has bought in the following (GenAI Literacy Trainer Essentials):</p> <p>https://www.aiforeducation.io/train-the-trainer-institute-genai-literacy-trainer-essentials?ss_source=sscampaigns&ss_campaign_id=67bf38f4acff4a0f97bcd759&ss_email_id=67bf483ddf2f0909bd0bbd7b&ss_campaign_name=Become+a+GenAI+Literacy+Trainer&ss_campaign_sent_date=2025-02-26T16%3A58%3A42Z</p> <p>Training will be provided on how to be AI literated. This will then include workshops from the DLU team, guidelines, and ethical discussions, to ensure that AI tools are used</p>	

	<p>transparently, critically, and effectively in academic and professional settings.</p> <p>We always keep informed with the UNESCO's Guidance for GenAI in Education and Research, that provides clear principles for responsible AI use and we implement this knowledge in our teaching strategies, methodologies and materials. Additionally, the EU's AI Act, which categorizes AI risk levels in education, will be leveraged to align institutional policies with regulatory standards.</p>	
<p>The fact that learning is a social, co-constructive process and not just based on individual effort may need to be communicated to the students more extensively and explicitly, perhaps by including reflections on this on a meta-level and linking this to theories of learning. This should also be important with regard to the fact that many of the students will work as educators themselves in the future. While the students we talked with were aware of the potentially beneficial effect of shared activities in social and emotional terms, they seemed to be less cognizant of their effects for learning.</p>	<p>Thank you for this valuable comment. To help our students further recognise that learning is a social, co-constructive process rather than just an individual effort, we are currently and explicitly integrating social learning theories (e.g., Vygotsky, Piaget) into their learning activities and encourage meta-reflections on collaborative learning experiences. We have included structured activities such as peer-to-peer teaching, real life scenarios and case studies, as well as group-based inquiry projects that have been intentionally designed in such a way to reinforce the cognitive benefits of collaboration. We have also incorporated reflection exercises, including guided questions, learning journals, and discussion forums, that help students process their experiences and understand how shared learning enhances comprehension. To link this understanding to their future teaching careers, students during their practicum will observe and design lesson plans that incorporate social learning strategies, preparing them to apply these concepts in educational settings. We are also using and demonstrating the use of technology to support co-constructive learning through collaborative writing tools and group discussions.</p>	
<p>While physical resources are less important for an online programme, the programme could benefit from some technical equipment, such as a video recording room or at least some technical devices to record lectures in a professional way.</p>	<p>Thank you for the suggestion. The university has already developed a podcast studio that is been used also as a recording room. Moreover, the department's annual budget gives us the resources to purchase some technical devices (laptops, cameras, etc) to record lectures in a professional way, in full agreement with your recommendations.</p>	

<p>It is recommended to design more detailed strategies regarding internationalisation and international mobility of students, including questions of, for example, compatibility of study abroad with studying the programme, or when it might be more adequate to focus on “internationalisation at home”.</p>	<p>Thank you for the recommendation. We also believe that designing detailed strategies for internationalisation and student mobility requires a well-structured approach that aligns with our university’s strategic plan, funding opportunities, and other partnerships.</p> <p>Some things we already do and plan to expand further are the below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have already developed a strategic plan that includes goals for internationalisation. We promote collaboration with other institutions, (e.g. some are our stakeholders), which help with student internship, knowledge exchange. 2. We align our programme with global education policies (e.g. Erasmus+, UNESCO). 3. Offer diverse international learning opportunities will assist in developing short-term study programmes that can offer summer schools, involvement in research projects. Our Research Centre can help us achieve this. We also plan to implement blended/virtual exchange programmes to make mobility more accessible for all students (e.g. a global classroom where students will collaborate with peers from international universities). 4. Alongside with the Student Union, we plan to foster an international culture, where global events, and cultural societies will be formed and promoted (e.g. International Week). <p>We also ask international guest speakers to come and present or run a seminar in our modules. Students are also presented with learning resources and websites from other countries, so an inclusive and multicultural and multilingual classroom to be promoted.</p>	
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6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.	Choose level of compliance:




7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
No further recommendations mentioned by the EEC.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Choose level of compliance:

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
As fields for further development, we suggest further building knowledge and best practices regarding e-learning and the use of GenAI, as this is most crucial for a programme that is taught online.	We have already discussed this in previous sections. We are constantly organizing a series of internal training sessions for all staff to cover all the pedagogical aspects of distance education. The training series is organizing in a workshop format. External and internal experts are invited to deliver seminars and workshops. For example, all the staff are required to participate in three online workshops per academic year and then share their knowledge with others. In addition, other related seminars and workshops will be organized in the coming months as we proceed with our distance learning programmes in education. Special attention is given to AI literacy. We always keep informed with the UNESCO's Guidance for GenAI in Education and Research, that provides clear principles for responsible AI use, and we implement this knowledge in our teaching strategies, methodologies and materials. Additionally, the EU's AI Act, which categories AI risk levels in education, has been leveraged to align institutional policies with regulatory standards.	Choose level of compliance:
Also, we suggest thinking more systematically about the use of teaching methodologies across the programme, as well as about involving students and stakeholders in processes of quality assurance.	We agree and in response to this and other valuable comments, we are already thinking more systematically about teaching methodologies across the programme. We also took action to actively involve students and stakeholders in quality assurance by adopting a structured, data-driven, and participatory approach. For example, using a teaching map to map different methodologies to specific courses and outcomes, ensuring coherence. Faculty collaboration is enhanced through team meetings where we share our best practices and challenges. Student involvement is strengthened through their feedback to us and implementing the 'you said, we did' method, where students work with us to review and refine assessment practices. We also engage our stakeholders so they can assess our programmes relevance from their own experience and point of view.	Choose level of compliance:

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Theodore Panayotou	Rector	
Prof. Doron Sonsino	Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities	
Dr. Panagiotis Kosmas	Acting Head of the Department of Education/Director of the Programme	

Date: 13.03.2025

