Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 11 April 2022

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

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

  In Greek:

  Programme Name

  In English:
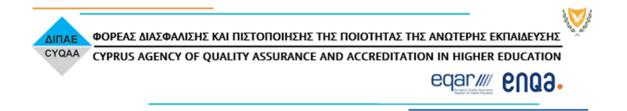
  Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) (5 years, 300 ECTS, undergraduate veterinary medicine degree)

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

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

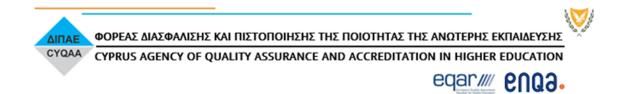 **In Greek:** Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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 300.1.1/2 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.*

- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

  - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
  - *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.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*

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

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

Findings

Study program design and development are extensively exposed in the application and the regional needs of the establishment of an international course of Veterinary Medicine has been emphasized during the visit.

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their positive comments. We are pleased that they consider the Veterinary Medicine programme to have been extensively described in both the application and throughout the visit. We welcomed the constructive approach that the EEC took in their assessment.

The study program includes all the Vet Med topics and generally meets the requirements of the EU Directive on the mutual recognition of professions and reflects the purposes of higher education of the Council of EU, particularly preparing for sustainable employment and promoting personal development giving basic and advanced knowledge.

We thank the EEC for recognising that the programme has been developed to meet the requirements of the EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and, subject to CyQAA approval to deliver the programme, we will apply for it to be listed in the respective annex of the EU directive.
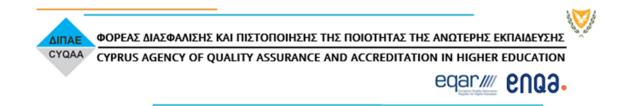
The program is designed adopting an interesting integrative and interdisciplinary approach to the Vet disciplines. This is a modern approach which could also contribute to establish a One Health architecture, in synergy with the Medical School, in order to promote connection with the society. The programme includes most Veterinary disciplines, and the ECTS assigned to each of them are appropriate in general; however, some disciplines deserve to be highlighted and improved in the programme (see recommendations below). The program architecture is based on the ECTS system, and the content and work related to the ECTS within any single course are listed.

We are pleased that the EEC recognises the approach to the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) curriculum that has been adopted as modern and integrated. It has been designed to encourage spiral learning.

The University of Nicosia holds both the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement Label. As such, the programme and its component courses are credit based. Credits are allocated to entire qualifications or study programmes as well as to their educational components (such as modules, course units, dissertation work, work placements, laboratory work, etc.). The number of credits ascribed to each component is based on its weight in terms of the workload students need to achieve the learning outcomes in a formal context.

Credits are awarded to individual students after completion of the learning activities required and the successful assessment of the expected learning outcomes.

In the application, policies for quality assurance (QA) are clear and compliant with the guidelines for QA in European higher education. QA includes structures, regulations, and processes to assure quality in teaching, learning and management. Student complaints are also highly considered as well as the denounce of eventual intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

We appreciate the EEC's recognition of our approach to providing clear policies and procedures that are embedded consistently in our practices. We place a strong emphasis on quality assurance activity which provides us with key opportunities to not only monitor our provision but to encourage reflection and contribute to continuous improvement of our programmes and infrastructure. Our QA structures are reflected at departmental, school and university levels to provide appropriate levels of monitoring, management and oversight respectively.

In relation to our approach to student complaints, significant weight is given to fostering an open, safe learning environment where students feel enabled to raise issues. Additionally, we have processes in place to provide students an opportunity to be able to appeal the outcome of procedures should they feel dissatisfied with the outcome.

Study programme is subject to a formal institutional and Veterinary Chamber approval and will be periodically reviewed and revised, involving teachers, students and external stakeholders, taking into account also external expertise.

We have been pleased to be able to welcome the input of an International Advisory Committee, comprising experts in the field, and whose extensive subject knowledge we can continue to benefit from. Internally, there are established processes for review of the programme, both annually as well as a more holistic review every five years. These mechanisms will support us in maintaining a current and relevant programme that takes into account the latest developments in the field of veterinary medicine.

Selection criteria, intended learning outcome, teaching, learning, pass rate and assessment procedures are clearly stated.

The programme team and supporting administrators have considerable experience in developing and delivering programmes and we are pleased that the EEC have recognised that the procedures are clearly stated. These will be made available to applicants via a website that has been prepared and for students and staff via Moodle.

Management of the study programme includes monitoring and analysis of performance indicators, profile of student population, the student regular progression and students' satisfaction feedback. Moreover, student welfare is supported and monitored, and students may also receive individual support addressing various needs.

We welcome the EEC's recognition of the processes in place to ensure effective monitoring which includes feedback from our stakeholders, including students, and its contribution to the overall management of the programme.

Furthermore, the acknowledgement of our approach to student welfare. Student well-being and student support are priorities on which we place significant emphasis. For example through the processes in place to support those students with specific learning difficulties and disabilities, to help them to succeed with their learning in a nurturing environment.

Strengths

The Vet Med study programme is generally in line with other Vet Med courses in other countries including the EU. The programme includes also up-to date topics for Vet Med (e.g. Dentistry).

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Our programme has been designed to meet the requirements of the EU directive for the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, and which will enable our students to practice as veterinarians across the EU/EEA member states and Switzerland. This is in line with our key market for recruitment as well as a precursor to an accreditation application to the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE).

We have designed the programme to address all necessary topics in contemporary veterinary medicine and given emphasis to strengthening graduate knowledge not only in small animals but also in large animals (including equine). The inclusion of 34 weeks of extramural studies at UNIC-approved sites will provide students the opportunity to strengthen their day one skills.

There are clear and appropriate QA procedures for monitoring program realization, teaching, learning and management.

We thank the EEC's recognition of our procedures for the assurance of the programme. As noted above, our focus on quality is key across all of our activities. Similarly, we place emphasis on ensuring that those procedures for review and assurance remain relevant.
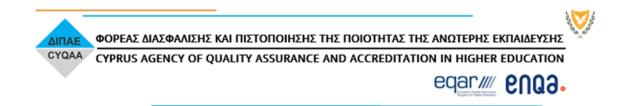
The selection criteria for students and attention to their feedback, career progression and welfare is clearly listed.

The selection criteria have been developed in order for us to accept high-quality applicants. We are pleased to have in place the infrastructure of UNIC Health to ensure our support of students through every step of their 'student journey' from application to graduation and beyond. For example, from the student services team providing opportunities to meet fellow students through activities during orientation week to the ongoing support of alumni as they navigate their professional careers.

<u>**Areas of improvement and recommendations**</u>

As already stated, the program is generally well designed and addressed for the Veterinary profession. The assignment of the number of ECTS for each discipline is based on a minimum number of 3 credits and each discipline has 3, 6 or 9 ECTS. This ECTS distribution based on multiples of 3 is useful but in some cases does not reflect completely the number of ECTS really necessary for the appropriate development of the discipline, considering distribution of theoretical and practical hours and the importance of the discipline in the veterinary profession.

An example: Food Hygiene. It is one of the main fields of work of a veterinarian. It represents one of the most important veterinary duties in the Public Health sector and is one of the most highlighted topics in the post-graduate additional exam which is the requirement in many European countries in order to be admitted to the Veterinary Chamber and to be allowed to practice the Veterinary profession. In numerous EU Countries a huge number of ECTS is assigned to Food Hygiene, which is also always divided into at least 2 different courses: a basic one and an advanced one including meat and fish inspection. In the present study programme, a single course of 6 ECTS of Food Hygiene is included. During the visit the course content was discussed and the fact that some topics of Food Hygiene are included in other courses was highlighted to us; however, we stated the importance of an extensive and complete knowledge in Food Hygiene for a Veterinarian, and therefore the revision of the course is highly recommended and the division of Food Hygiene into two different courses is suggested. Moreover, knowing that meat and fish inspection requires a

solid base of systematic pathology, it is suggested that the newly created course of Food Hygiene II is placed in the second semester of the 4th year after pathology seminars.

This latter example also introduces another concern to be taken into account: the year/semester assignment of the various courses. The course of Medicine, already existing in UNIC, has been taken as an example; however, the Vet Med program is different, including various species and various fields, from those typical to human medicine to those linked with zootechnic and agronomic world. Moreover, it must be remarked that all fundamental courses, in the present programme, are given within 4 years with the risk of course compression and potentially leading to extensive workload and student stress. All this stated, it is suggested that the year/semester position of each course is carefully re-considered.

Some examples:

a) **The semester allocation of Cattle Medicine and Pharmacology-Toxicology (both on the 3rd year), can be inverted, transferring Cattle Medicine to the second semester and**

Pharmacology-Toxicology to the first one. Both courses have 6 ECTS each so this should be possible.

b) **Systematic pathology/Seminars in pathology) may be moved to the 3rd year if a Food Hygiene II course (meat, fish inspection) is created. If Food Hygiene remains a single course (with increased number of ECTS), it should be given after "Seminars in Pathology".**

c) **The EEC recommends that Anaesthesia and Analgesia as a fundamental "day-one" skill is taught as an independent subject to be aligned with most European veterinary schools. This newly created subject should either include the pharmacology of anaesthetic agents or be placed after Pharmacology & Toxicology in the curriculum.**

We thank the EEC for their considered suggestions and confirm that these changes have been completed, adjusting the curriculum delivery, as described above. In addressing each of these we have revisited the delivery of courses in Years 3 and 4, so as to best support the student's experience. More specifically,

a) we have now inverted the allocation of courses VET-304 Cattle Medicine and VET-310 Veterinary Pharmacology and Toxicology, as shown in the table of courses, available in Appendix 1: Semester breakdown. We recognise that, by moving the Veterinary Pharmacology and Toxicology course to the first semester of Year 3, we strengthen students' knowledge of Pharmacology, which is essential for better comprehension of courses like Herd Management and Medicine and Systems Medicine II, taught in the second semester of the same year.

b) we have taken on board the EEC's suggestions regarding Food Hygiene. The recommendation provides us with an opportunity to emphasise that Food Safety is covered as a strand that passes through the entire programme and is included in relevant parts of the following courses:

Year 1: VET-105 Animal Husbandry;

Year 2: VET-203: Veterinary Microbiology, VET-204 Veterinary Parasitology, VET-206 Introduction to Pathology and Systems Medicine I (gastroenteric and respiratory diseases) and VET-209 Public Health Management;

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Year 3: VET-303 Principles of the Veterinary Profession, VET-304 Cattle Medicine, VET-305 Small Ruminant and Pig Medicine, VET-302 Food Safety and Hygiene, VET-308 Systems Medicine II (cardiac, neurological and endocrine and metabolic diseases) and VET-309 Herd Health Management;

Year 4: VET-401 Systems Medicine III (haematological, oncological, immune-mediated and ocular diseases), VET-402 Pathology Seminars, VET-405 Poultry and Fish Medicine and VET-407 Systems Medicine IV (dermatological, bone and joint diseases); and,

In Year 5: VET-502 Farm Animal Core Clinical Rotation.

In addition to the ambulatory farm practice and herd health experience, the farm animal clinical rotation in Year 5 contains a week of Food Safety and Hygiene which covers the practical skills in an abattoir as well as case studies to integrate the principles of 'farm to fork' and to consolidate the skills and knowledge gained throughout the entire course. Course descriptions have been provided in Appendix 2 for ease of reference.

Regarding the teaching of pathology and its place in the programme, each of the Systems Medicine courses will have pathology input to strengthen the pathophysiological understanding of disease. This will be provided either as a separate lecture(s) per system or as a contribution to certain lectures where the pathology is deemed important. There is also the involvement of a pathologist in the practical sessions relating to each system.
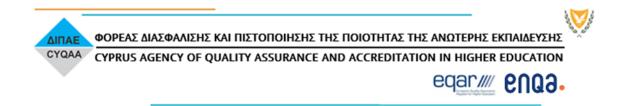
Further, we believe that the Pathology Seminars need to be given late in the course since they are designed to bring together all the systems and species pathology. This will enable the students to get the most out of a post-mortem examination, which is a Day One Competence. As a result, we have moved the Pathology Seminars to the second semester of Year 4, by swapping the course with Systems Medicine IV.

c) We value the EEC's comment regarding Anaesthesia and Analgesia and the suggestion to create a course based on this. The programme has been designed so that Anaesthesia is covered as a strand in the following courses, hence the course content of all these courses will be taken into account when assessing the overall teaching of Anaesthesia:

Year 3: VET-310 Veterinary Pharmacology and Toxicology (now moved into the first semester of Year 3 as suggested by the EEC), noting that the learning objectives for weeks 1 to 4 inclusive are particularly relevant to anaesthesia, VET-301 Diagnostic Skills Development I where the learning objectives for weeks 9 to 12 inclusive are devoted to veterinary anaesthesia, and VET-306 Diagnostic Skills Development II with the learning objectives for weeks 10 to 12 inclusive being devoted to veterinary anaesthesia.

Specifically, within these Year 3 courses, Diagnostic Skills Development I and II include only Day One Competences, including History Taking, Clinical Examination, Problem-Solving, Critical Thinking, Radiography, Anaesthesia, Pain Relief, Pharmacology of Sedatives and Anaesthetic Agents, Complications during anaesthesia, Principles of Ultrasonography, Sample Collection and Handling. Therefore, these two core courses grouped together provide a total of 12 ECTS.

Year 4: VET-411 Introduction to Emergency Medicine and Critical Care, where the entire course covers aspects that are relevant to anaesthesia, and the learning objectives for weeks 1 to 4 are particularly relevant, and;

In Year 5: VET-501 Small Animal Clinical Rotation, VET-502 Farm Animal Clinical Rotation and VET-503 Equine Clinical Rotation. For each of these clinical rotation courses, anaesthesia will form an important part of the student experience, and in addition, there is a specific 2-week anaesthesia rotation that forms part of the Small Animal Clinical Rotation.

Please see Appendix 2: Course descriptions for further details.

We thank the Committee for their constructive evaluation of our curriculum and the opportunity to re-emphasize the integrative manner through which basic sciences, communication skills, public health and food hygiene are integrated vertically along individual courses and horizontally across the curriculum in an evolutionary manner. This approach ensures that these themes are revisited across the curriculum, thus enhancing knowledge consolidation.

We consider the curriculum as a living document and that changes will be in accordance to student feedback and staff reflection in order to maintain a vibrant, modern and relevant course in veterinary medicine.

Assessment sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

Findings

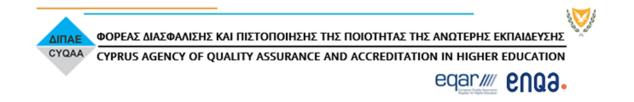### 2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.* **YES***

- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.* **YES***

- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.* **YES**

- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.* **YES**

- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.* **YES**

- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.* **YES**

- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.* **SEE BELOW***

- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.* **YES**

2.2 Practical training

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.* **YES**

- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.* **YES**

2.3 Student assessment

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.* **YES**

- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.* **YES**

- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.* **YES**

- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.* **YES**

- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.* **YES**

- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.* **YES**

- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.* **YES**

- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.* **YES**

The programme is designed by senior academic staff with significant international experience in the design and implementation of veterinary medical curriculum. The curriculum is aligned with the EQF, and there is an Assessment Committee that oversees the assessment strategy of the programme. The school's scheme of assessment is clearly defined, and the staff and students are made aware of it. The school uses both formative and summative assessment: formative assessment familiarises the students with the assessment format and provides them with feedback. Summative assessment counts towards student grades and progression. Until the school develops its own exam question bank, the assessment is based on the current RVC exams.

We thank the EEC for recognising the many strengths of the programme, that has been devised by subject experts and benefitted from review by our International Advisory Board for veterinary medicine. Utilising international expertise has been key, given the lack of sufficient academically-oriented experts in Cyprus to date. We will thus continue to seek external feedback in line with the development and delivery of all aspects of the curriculum.

With regard to the Scheme of Assessment, we are pleased that it was found to be clearly defined. As the EEC noted, and as we develop a suitable bank of assessment questions and OSCE stations over the coming years, we will need to make use of reliable external sources, such as the International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). Furthermore, we will be implementing a robust External Examiner Scheme, with one external examiner for each year in Years 1-4 and three External Examiners for Year 5. The final Year written exams and the OSCEs (in format and level of difficulty) will be fully aligned with the Statutory Membership Exam organised in the UK by RCVS and the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) in the USA organised by the by ICVA.

In addition to the assessment of knowledge, the students have a list of essential clinical skills that are assessed during the final (5th) year of studies using an application called 'My Progress'. This application records successful attempts and provides feedback. These clinical skills apply to both small and large animals and laboratory and diagnostic procedures.

For all three components of the clinical training (Small animals, Farm animals and equine) our extensive skills portfolio, to be launched from Year 3, will include not only intramural but extramural studies. This tool will assist us in ensuring that day one skills are re-visited during the EMS training and will also help us evaluate and monitor the quality of the EMS training sites.

The ultimate goal of the training and assessment is to meet the requirements of qualifying/accrediting bodies and to ensure that on completion of the degree, the students pass the relevant qualifying exams (such as the NAVLE or the RCVS Statutory Membership Exam).

Given our plans to admit an international cohort, understanding the different routes to registration that students will follow will be a key element of the careers support and guidance that our Careers and Alumni team will offer. They will develop resource materials for our main target markets and hold face to face meetings with students from Year 1 to discuss their aspirations and guide them through the requirements to licensing. To further support students in meeting the requirements of their national regulatory bodies, we will provide practice tests where possible.

In order to support those students aspiring to practise in the USA, we have already commenced with a proposal to be able to deliver the Veterinary Educational Assessment (VEA) examinations through the onsite Prometric testing centre. The VEA will offer our school a comprehensive, standardized, independent assessment of knowledge in basic veterinary medical sciences. It will allow us to track the performance of our students in the above content areas over time, and to compare their performance to that of students from other veterinary schools.

Practical student training is implemented early on. During the first two years, the students will get practice in animal handling, clinical skills and communications skills. Small animal handling sessions happen in the medical school facilities or alternatively in the veterinary anatomy laboratory until the designated companion animal hospital is completed. Large animal handling practice can be obtained in the participating farms, to which the students will have minibus transport from the main campus.

The EEC have noted our intention to support students with early exposure to practical training in the programme. We view this as an important way to engage them in their chosen course and as a stepping stone towards the clinical courses of Year 5. Both intramural and extramural practical training will underpin this objective. This will not only assist students in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to be applied in Year 5 but will also help them clarify, in their minds, the career path they wish to follow.
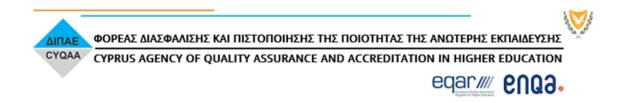
Strengths

The teaching is student-oriented and student feedback plays an important role in ensuring and maintaining the quality of education. The students also receive the plan for small group teaching and the rooms, learning resources, equipment and laboratories available for practicals are up to standard and modern. In addition to theoretical studies, the students are introduced to 'hands-on' veterinary medicine from early on in form of animal handling, clinical skills and communication skills sessions. This motivates the students and helps them to connect theory with practice. It also helps with the early development of manual dexterity and diagnostic competence.

We take a student-centred approach to all of our activities and are pleased that the EEC recognise the emphasis that we place on this. As noted earlier, seeking feedback from students is a cornerstone to our QA work, and processes to inform them of how their feedback has been used to develop further the programme enables us to close the feedback loop effectively. For example, in providing details in the semester handbooks of how student feedback has – amongst other stakeholder feedback – contributed to enhancements to the curriculum.

In regard to the early exposure to practical, hands-on training, as per the EEC's comment, this is to provide suitable experience and skills teaching to prepare students for the realities and expectations of their professional career.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

 * While there are policies and procedures in place for students with disabilities, the external evaluation committee would like to get more information about how the non-disabled students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities are taken into consideration when

conducting educational activities – this information is not found in the material provided (therefore partially compliant).

We thank the EEC for the opportunity to describe our student-centred approach to teaching, learning and assessment, which is based on supporting students based on their needs. Indeed, this is one of the objectives of our student-centred learning plan. (Please see Appendix 3: Student-centred education plan). In practical terms this includes delivering teaching that facilitates active learning and understanding, through a variety of methods.

Moreover, we have substantial, robust academic and well-being support mechanisms in place to complement this. For example, for those students that may be facing learning difficulties, our reasonable adjustment processes can help to identify where additional support may be necessary and can be actioned. Further details are found in Appendix 4: Supporting students with disabilities.

These tools and processes enable learning to take place in light of the diverse nature of our cohort, who may for example, require an Interruption of Study to recover from ill-health. In returning to study, an assessment of the student's health status takes place and additional levels of support (academic and pastoral) may be utilised if necessary and depending on the health condition.

The students can be involved in research projects (in data collection, epidemiological studies etc.) but based on the information we have, they are not involved in the actual research set-up.

However, the external evaluation committee feels that research is not a necessary 'day-one skill'.

While the programme has a well-developed curriculum in the principles underpinning evidence-based medicine, including the dedicated course in Year 1 (VET-110 Evidence-based Medicine and Research Methods, 6 ECTS) as well as the opportunity to complete a Research Project in Year 5 (VET-504, 10 ECTS), we agree with the EEC that the ability to undertake actual research set up is also very important.

We have planned for a variety of activity and support for students, with them being given opportunities to contribute to the three pillars of the veterinary medicine research agenda, i.e., microbiology under the One Health concept; farm animal genetic improvement approaches; and, disease and process modelling. Moreover, the collaboration with the Agricultural Research Institute will be key to this objective as it holds 50-year-old genetic data from its genetics improvement plan for large animals, and students will have direct access to this data for original research projects. In addition, students will be active in research as part of their extracurricular activities, including participation in a 'Students in Research' programme, through which we aim to offer a number of research projects to students to complete under the supervision of our faculty. For those with a specific interest, they will be able to propose new research projects. Furthermore, they will have an opportunity to establish a student-led conference to present the findings of their research – enabling them to gain experience at all stages of a research project.

Assessment sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Partially compliant

2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

Findings

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development:

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.* **Yes**

- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.* **Yes**

- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme*, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.* **Yes**

- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.* **Yes, they will as soon as the programme has started**

- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.* **Yes**

- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.* **Yes**

- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.* **Yes**

- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.* **Not applicable**
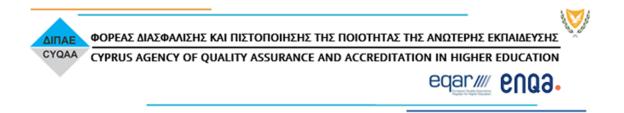
3.2 Teaching staff number and status

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study** ***Yes***.

- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.* ***Yes***

- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff**.*

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).* ***Yes, at the moment still mainly with the medical faculty of the University of Nicosia (UNIC)***

- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.* ***Yes***

- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.* ***Yes*** • *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.* ***Yes***

- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.* ***Yes*** ***

We are pleased to see that the EEC has assessed this area as compliant across the different sections. As noted, this is in relation to existing faculty that have been identified for the early years of the programme. We will be maintaining the same standards for the recruitment, development and support of all faculty including those for the later years of the programme.

Strengths

Adequate, fully qualified and motivated staff for the start of this new programme. The appointed and prospective members of teaching personnel for each course during the first two years of the programme have shown during the interviews that they either possess the relevant formal and fundamental qualifications for teaching the course or alternatively will receive an appropriate teaching course prior to the start of the year (expertise, specialization, doctorate, publications).

We thank the EEC for recognising the skills and qualifications of those faculty that have already been recruited for the early years of the programme. We are pleased to note their enthusiasm to be part of the first veterinary medicine programme in Cyprus, and grateful for their contributions to date, in developing their individual course(s).

We followed existing robust university processes for recruitment in our call to attract high-calibre faculty to join us. These are described in Chapter 6 of the University's Internal Regulations (enclosed as Appendix 5). The same procedures will be implemented upon approval of the programme to enable us to recruit for the latter years of the programme. The timeline for this is shown in Appendix 6: Staff recruitment plan.
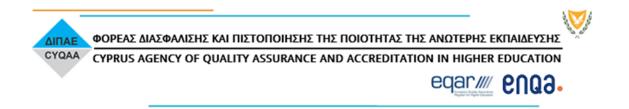
The program coordinator has the qualifications and experience to expertly and efficiently coordinate the program of study.

We agree with the EEC that the Programme Director, Professor Herrtage has the necessary expertise to lead the programme. He is internationally recognised in his field, in particular in his specialisms of Small Animal Medicine and Diagnostic Imaging, and his extensive expertise provides us with considerable benefit, not least his fourteen years as Dean of the Veterinary School of the University of Cambridge, as we embark on developing an academic veterinary medicine community in Cyprus.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

* Due to the ambition to increase the number of students from 30 to 80 in a five-year period, long-term planning for staff and support needs may be useful. It should be noted that a large part of the staff for the later years of study still has to be recruited at this moment. From that point of view, making a multi-year planning available at the moment could be helpful in taking action and getting a grip on the process. This also from the point of view that internationally there is a shortage of qualified veterinarians and diplomates of the ABVS/EBVS to be able to provide clinical education. In addition, Cypriot law requires mastery of the Greek language for veterinarians working practically such as the Companion Animal Teaching Hospital and the Equine facility to be set up.

We are pleased that the EEC has recognised our plans as ambitious. The market for veterinary programmes is large given the sparsity of programmes, in particular in the region, and we are confident in our ability to reach potential cohorts of high-achieving school leavers, and to being able to provide local opportunities to students who would previously have had to travel overseas to complete training.

As indicated in the above, we have defined the timeline and schedule for the appointment of the additional faculty for the programme, to ensure a suitable lead-in time, for those faculty to become accustomed to the programme as well as to develop fully the teaching materials for their courses. The multi-year planning document can be found as Appendix 6.

We thank the EEC for providing us with an opportunity to clarify about those faculty who do not meet the language requirements to practice as veterinarians. Any non-Greek speakers that join the programme's academic team will not be teaching as part of clinical practice. All of those that are involved in veterinary clinical practice will meet all requirements to practice in Cyprus and fully licensed to do so, including meeting the Greek language requirements.

** After a first start with the program, attracting visiting professors or other experts in special areas of special interest certainly deserves attention.

We expect to attract Visiting Professors from year 2 of delivery onwards. Initially, their expert fields are likely to be in line with our Veterinary Medicine Research Agenda, i.e., microbiology under the One Health concept; farm animal genetic improvement approaches; and, disease and process modelling. Thereafter, these appointments will expand in line with more general development of the infrastructure of the School of Veterinary Medicine and our growth.

Visiting Professors will additionally bring benefits to students through their knowledge of careers in their specialty area, and the Careers and Alumna Team will be able to tap into this and provide 'A Career in...' specialty-focussed sessions to contribute to the support provided to students.

 *** Ensuring allocated research time of 30% for full time appointed faculty is valuable but can be pressured by clinical and teaching activities.

We are pleased to note the EEC's acknowledgement of the importance of allocating appropriate time to research for our faculty. Ring-fencing this 30% of their time will also allow us to not over-burden faculty with teaching activities, or clinical duties where relevant. Indeed, this includes restricting teaching only to 20% of allocated faculty time. Planned teaching hours are demonstrated in the table provided as Appendix 7: Teaching hours. As standard, annually individual faculty performance appraisal will take place as part of our faculty support and development activities. Further, each year the Programme Director, Head of Department and School Dean will undertake reviews of all faculty responsibilities and teaching hours, so that the allocation of activities can be appropriately shared among the team. Such reviews also contribute to identifying additional faculty need, again to help support faculty having enough time to pursue research activity.

Assessment sub-areas:

In the assessment area, the teaching staff has been assessed as compliant by the EEC, but for the above reasons, this applies in particular to the first two years of the programme.

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant

3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

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

Findings

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.* **_Yes_**
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.* **_Yes_**
- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.* **_Yes_**
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.* **_Yes_**
- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.* **_Yes_**
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.* **_Yes_**
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:* **_Yes_**
    - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
    - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*
- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.* **_Yes_**
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.* **_Yes_**

We thank the EEC for recognising the standards and expectations that we have in place for student admission, progression, recognition and certification, and for assessing us as compliant across this area.

Strengths

The student admission requirements have been clearly set for students (both national and international). Academic and English language Requirements are being described in the 4.11 section of the application for evaluation – Accreditation-Program of study (document 200.1). There is a well-defined system to monitor student progress throughout the study cycle, and a structured procedure to act when students are not progressing.

Admission requirements have been carefully set to ensure comparability with equivalent veterinary programmes in the EU, and enable us to secure high-calibre candidates. We are pleased that the EEC noted our effort to provide clear information regarding the programme's admission criteria which, pending CyQAA approval to deliver the programme, will be applied in a consistent and transparent manner.

The provision of successful completion of all courses in all years, ensures a high-quality program delivery, while the multiple level support of failing students (Course lead/Year lead/Program director and Registry) is expected to provide students a stern support to improve and progress in their studies.

We thank the EEC for their positive comments regarding the programme's progression requirements and academic support. The programme's Scheme of Assessment has been designed to ensure that decisions

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on academic progression are well-supported and that our students will be able to benefit from our progress monitoring and support system in case of any difficulties.

The utilisation of a software to monitor the progress of the clinical skills of students is expected to motivate and engage them in their progress.

We use MyProgress to monitor our undergraduate medical students' clinical performance and reflective skills. It is an easy-to-use and reliable software programme, and it has been particularly welcomed by our current students. We are confident that, similarly, it will be a very useful tool for the DVM programme, especially in the delivery of the 5th year and the skills assessments that will form part of the clinical placements.

A case-by-case assessment for transfer student applicants allows a fair approach to applicants coming from different backgrounds and diverse methods of study at the original institute.

Indeed, a highly-selective case-by-case approach ensures that each applicant's academic credentials are considered appropriately and academic equivalency is ensured prior to any credit transfer approval. We follow University policy in regards to transfer of credits, ensuring that no more than a third of the credits are completed outside of UNIC, in line with CyQAA expectations. We also take into account the requirements of other quality assurance agencies that are relevant to our students' career paths, for example, to ensure that decisions will not preclude students from being able to have their award recognised in their home country.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

There are no exceptions from English Language requirements for students graduating from Cyprus-based, English-speaking high schools.

We wish to clarify that our language requirements have been set to comply with the regulations of CyQAA, as our local accrediting agency. Based on these regulations, the requirement for providing evidence of English language proficiency includes students from Cyprus-based, English-speaking high schools. Those who originate from native English-speaking countries and specifically the UK, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, USA and Canada (English-speaking schools only) are not required to provide this evidence.

Regarding the recognition of prior learning, the committee's suggestion is to apply equal entry requirements for applicants originating from the same Veterinary Faculty applying within the same academic year (i.e. belonging to the same student cohort). Those entry requirements can be evaluated on a regular basis, to take into account the status of the originating veterinary faculty.

We welcome the EEC's suggestion, and where appropriate, will apply equal requirements to those applicants originating from the same veterinary programme. Naturally, this will only apply to those applicants that have studied within the same programme at the same time since curricula change. It is important that we remain assured that the content is in line with our own curriculum content, to prevent any knowledge gaps, that might be to the detriment of the particular students, their progression and/or their future practice.

Assessment sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

Findings

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.* **Yes (some equipment has been ordered and to be provided)**

- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).* **Yes**

- *All resources are fit for purpose.* **Yes**

- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.* **Yes**

5.2 Physical resources

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.* **Yes**

- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).* **Yes**

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.* **Yes**

5.3 Human support resources

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.* **Yes**

- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).* **Yes**

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students will be informed about the services available to them.* **Yes**

5.4 Student support

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.* **Yes**

- *Students are informed about the services available to them.* **Yes**

- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.* **Yes**

- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.* **Yes**

We are pleased to note that the EEC have recognised the extensive resources available at the university and in place to support the delivery of the programme. The programme will benefit from being supported by an experienced academic and administrative infrastructure, including substantial student support and well-being mechanisms.

Strengths

A very good feedback system.

As part of programme development, we will implement (and benefit from) regular data gathering from multiple sources. The feedback system is robust and takes place at a number of levels, with the outcomes of feedback and any enhancements implemented as a result, being fed back to the students. We are pleased that the EEC have recognised this as a very good system. The importance of student feedback, amongst that from other stakeholder groups including faculty, staff, and our clinical site partners, is paramount to us since it leads directly to improvements and, moreover, is used in the management of the programme.

Student counselling is available on request.

Student counselling is available free of charge to all students and forms part of our extensive student support mechanisms.

Periodic internal reviews have been scheduled, while a future EAEVE accreditation will be sought.

Regular reflection on our operational and educational practices forms part of our wider quality assurance activity, including an annual programme evaluation report, an external examiner scheme, and a more holistic internal review of the programme every five years. The latter will contribute to making informed enhancements to the curriculum, and maintain a current, relevant veterinary programme.

Regular committee meetings of the faculty take place, in which student representatives will be present.

The programme will be housed within the Department of Veterinary Medicine, itself within a School of Veterinary Medicine, and in line with the structures set out in the University's Charter. We have committees arranged in line with these structures, with a programme committee feeding into the Department Council and in turn up to the School Council. At each level, students will be represented, by those elected by their peers, and will take an active role in decision making.

Student mobility programs are enabled (Erasmus+) and encouraged.

We are pleased that the EEC noted our encouragement of student mobility. Indeed, UNIC has been previously ranked first place in terms of mobility numbers amongst the private Universities in Cyprus. UNIC has also been previously ranked first in international mobilities which focus on countries outside the European Union and represent one of the newer initiatives by the European Commission regarding the Erasmus+ Program.

Providing opportunities for students to gain experience at other institutions for both studies and for internships abroad will be considered within university regulations. Furthermore, students will be able to choose the

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location of their extramural studies in the summer months upon approval. Students may choose to complete this component overseas and/or in the countries where they wish to work, in turn supporting their career aspirations. The longitudinal workplace-based assessments and the research project course provide further opportunities to develop professional networks while practicing essential veterinary practical and research skills.

We expect that these opportunities will only grow further with the recent development of UNIC joining the European University Alliance, NEOLAiA, an innovative European University with campuses across nine European countries.

Students with physical disabilities and learning needs are not excluded. Psychological support (by physicians and specialists) is provided for students.

Reasonable adjustments are available to all eligible students based on physical and learning disabilities and needs, and following an appropriate assessment. This is part of our overall commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. For further details, please see Appendix 4: Supporting students with disabilities.

An online platform (Moodle) is available for students to have access to teaching material.

Students will be provided with guidance in navigating Moodle during induction. All student learning materials will be made available on the Moodle learning platform, as will more general information about the programme, the sources of student support available, and careers resources.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

It is suggested that feedback from students will be mandatory for at least the first 5 years.

We welcome this suggestion by the EEC and recognise the value in receiving feedback on an on-going basis throughout the initial roll-out of the programme and help us to identify what is working well in addition to areas that may need particular focus.

In addition to this, we will be gathering regular feedback from multiple sources to ensure that all stakeholder opinion is taken into account in reviewing the programme in its early development and delivery.

Personnel working at premises involved in EMS should be evaluated by students at the end of every rotation.

We have implemented this recommendation from the EEC, which has been well-received, as it will again provide us with key feedback, and assist us in identifying where support may be welcomed by those delivering extra mural studies (EMS) to our students, as well as in developing a list of valued providers that later cohorts of students may want to approach for their EMS experiences.

Student dorms to be included at the distant farms/facilities the students will be attending for learning.

We thank the EEC for recommending the provision of student dorms at those farms placed some distance from Nicosia. Accommodation for students is available for those students that will rotate (in Year 5) at the Riverland Farm (goats and sheep farm). As all other farms are within a short driving distance of Nicosia, the provision of on-site accommodation will not be required at the majority of facilities.

Assessment sub-areas:

	Sub-area	*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

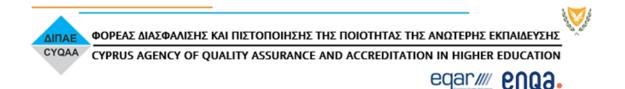## 6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

Not applicable.

7. Eligibility (Joint programme)

(ALL ESG)

Not applicable.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The University of Nicosia has taken the initiative to establish a School of Veterinary Medicine and the Department of Veterinary Medicine under which the program will be administered. Until the new school and department are established, the program will be administered by the medical school. A great effort has been made both to set up the new institute and to set up a new program for the training of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. The entire set-up takes into account legislation, quality requirements and a training program that can meet international standards. After all internal procedures have been completed, an evaluation by an external evaluation committee (EEC) is the next step in order to arrive at a final accreditation.
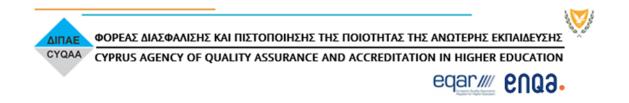
This EEC has been tasked by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) to carry out and report on the evaluation/accreditation process for both the study program and the institute. For this evaluation, the EEC received well-documented reports in advance. Subsequently, a site visit was carried out by the EEC on 14 and 15 March 2022. During the first day we had the opportunity to speak extensively with the Head of the Institute, the Dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine, other relevant authorities and the programs coordinators. Among other things, the structure of the school/department, the curriculum and the plans for a veterinary teaching hospital were discussed. Subsequently, attention was also paid to methodology and equipment used in teaching and learning and the degree of compliance with the CYQAA standards. The subsequent meetings with members of both the teaching and administrative staff gave us the opportunity to delve deeper into the content. The second day was devoted to visits to the institution's premises and its preclinical and clinical training facilities.

We are impressed by the effort that has been put in at all levels to bring about this new Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree program. We greatly appreciate their excellent preparation of the visit and their excellent informative and open-minded reception of the EEC. We have been delighted to carry out these evaluations and we hope that this can contribute to a successful completion of the accreditation process.

The EEC's positive comments here and throughout their report have been gratefully received. We would like to thank the EEC for the considerable time given throughout their evaluation and for the constructive and collegiate approach that they have taken. As we hope to have conveyed throughout the evaluation, as well as within this response, this is an exciting opportunity to develop and deliver the first veterinary medicine programme in Cyprus. Further, we have very much welcomed the opportunity that the evaluation process has provided us to reflect on our plans and take on board the suggestions of the EEC.

The programme for DVM responds to the modern insights of a competency-oriented curriculum and prepares graduates for most career options for a veterinary professional. The curriculum covers all the fundamental topics of veterinary medicine and professionalism and is also aligned with the One Health agenda. It must be noted that all fundamental courses, in the present programme, are given within 4 years with the risk of course compression and potentially leading to extensive workload and student stress. All this stated, it is suggested that the year/semester position of each course is carefully re-considered.

Students will acquire fundamental theoretical knowledge and develop clinical skills to acquire the necessary 'Day-one' skills. The curriculum is robust, whereby the courses will be further aligned in a few places to make a logical structure emerge even more strongly. The development and implementation of clinical education, in particular in the later phases of the programme, does

deserve the necessary attention in the coming period. This concerns both the recruitment of qualified staff for this education and the available clinical facilities.

We agree with the EEC's observations about the placement of some of the courses and have made appropriate adjustments to their overall position, to allow better preparation of the students for their fifth and final year of study, as well as in the development of Day One Skills and competencies for their postgraduate application in clinical practice. In line with the roll-out of the programme, we will be closely monitoring our delivery, including through multi-source feedback, and will make further enhancements as appropriate.

As set out in the faculty planning document (Appendix 6: Staff recruitment plan) we have made preparations to extend the recruitment of highly-skilled subject experts to fill the remaining faculty positions. These new faculty will benefit from the same substantial support and development mechanisms that are in place, and will enable us to establish a comprehensive and strong core team.

We remain very grateful for the insightfulness shown by the EEC and wish to thank them for their time. We are confident that implementation of the EEC's recommendations will further improve the provisions of the DVM programme and provide a solid foundation for a career in veterinary medicine.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Professor Stavros Malas	Foundation Head of School of Veterinary Medicine	
Professor Michael Herrtage	Foundation Head of Department of Veterinary Medicine	
Professor Adonis Ioannides	Elected member of university quality assurance committee	
Ms Jill Griffiths	Staff member of university quality assurance committee	

Date: 11 April 2022