Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 30 November 2020

External Evaluation Report (Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**

  Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics

- **Town:**
  Nicosia

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):**
  Cyprus School of Molecular Medicine

- **Department/ Sector:**

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

  In Greek:

  In English:

  PhD in Neuroscience

- **Language(s) of instruction**: **English**
- **Programme's status:** **Currently operating**

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

Due to Restrictions of Covid-19 pandemic this visit was conducted electronically via zoom meetings following the agenda below. The assessment panel was provided with the following agenda and materials

Ref. Numbers: 07.14.266.001 / 07.14.266.002 / 07.14.266.007

Programmes of study:

Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)   Neuroscience (13 months, 90 ECTS, MSc)

Neuroscience (4 years, 240 ECTS, PhD)

Biomedical Research (2 years, 120 ECTS, MSc)

Institution: Cyprus School of Molecular Medicine

Date of on-site visit: 30 November 2020 & 1 December 2020

Subject: Remote (online) External Evaluation Schedule

The online site visit will take place according to the following indicative schedule and it may be changed according to the EEC's suggestions:

* The times indicated below are in EET (Eastern European Time). Please check your time zones ahead of time.

CYQAA is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: CYQAA Meeting

Time: Nov 30, 2020 10:00 AM Cy time

and Dec 1, 2020 11:30 AM Cy time

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85350839187?pwd=TGZuaEJwQlBpQUtueXh5RCtZVUwwZz09

Meeting ID: 853 5083 9187

Passcode: 6dF0as

30 November 2020

10:00 – 10:10

• A brief introduction of the members of the External Evaluation Committee.

[10 minutes]

10:10 – 10:40

• A meeting with the Provost and the Dean of the Cyprus School of Molecular Medicine – short presentation of the School.

[15 minutes]

Participants:

Name   Position

Prof. Leonidas Phylactou   Provost

Prof. Kyriacos Kyriacou   Dean

Mr. Marinos Voukis   Education Office Manager

•   A meeting with members of the Internal Quality Assurance Committee and the Academic Committee.
[15 minutes]

Participants:

Name   Position

Prof. Leonidas Phylactou   Provost

Prof. Kyriacos Kyriacou   Dean

Mr. Marios Flouros   Finance and Administrative Director

Mr. Marinos Voukis   Education Office Manager

Ms. Maria Theocharidou   Health & Safety and Quality Officer

10:40 – 11:00

•   Live streaming of the course MG 103 (for the NEURO Program).

Join Zoom Meeting

https://zoom.us/j/96254290242?pwd=aEI4RllQaFUzSzJKOU9vdDVrNVVLUT09

Meeting ID: 962 5429 0242

Passcode: 193538

11:00 – 11:40

Programme 1 (Neuroscience – MSc):

•   The programme's standards, admission criteria for prospective students, the learning outcomes and ECTS, the content and the persons involved in the programme's design and development   [40 minutes]

Maximum duration of presentation: 15′   Discussion: 25′

Participants:

Name   Position

Prof. Kleopas Kleopa   Program Coordinator

Prof. Kyriacos Kyriacou   Dean

Mr. Marinos Voukis   Education Office Manager

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

11:40 – 11:50

- Coffee Break   [10 minutes]

11:50 – 12:10

- Live streaming of the course BMI 101 (for the BMR Program).

Join Zoom Meeting

https://zoom.us/j/98881401049?pwd=dGp5TjEzRFFBS09naWlNODNublBJUT09

Meeting ID: 988 8140 1049

Passcode: 077287

12:10 – 12:50

Programme 2 (Neuroscience – PhD):

- The programme's standards, admission criteria for prospective students, the learning outcomes and ECTS, the content and the persons involved in the programme's design and development, number of doctoral students per academic
[40 minutes]

        Maximum duration of presentation: 15′   Discussion: 25′

        Participants:

Name	Position
Prof. Kleopas Kleopa	Program Coordinator
Prof. Kyriacos Kyriacou	Dean
Mr. Marinos Voukis	Education Office Manager

12:50 – 13:50

- Lunch Break   [60 minutes]

13:50 – 14:30

Programme 3 (Biomedical Research – MSc):

- The programme's standards, admission criteria for prospective students, the learning outcomes and ECTS, the content and the persons involved in the program's design and development   [40 minutes]

        Maximum duration of presentation: 15′   Discussion: 25′

        Participants:

Name	Position
Prof. Marios Cariolou	Program Coordinator
Prof. Kyriacos Kyriacou	Dean
Mr. Marinos Voukis	Education Office Manager

14:30 - 15:20

o   A meeting with members of the teaching staff on each course for all the programmes (QA session).

o   Discussion on the CVs (i.e. academic qualifications, publications, research interests, research activity, compliance with Staff ESG), on any other duties in the School and teaching obligations in other programmes.

o   Discussion on the content of each course and its implementation (i.e., methodologies, selected bibliography, students' workload, compliance with Teaching ESG).

o   Discussion on the learning outcomes, the content and the assessment of each course and their compliance with the level of the programmes according to the EQF.

o   Discussion on assessment criteria, samples of final exams or other teaching material and resources, dissertations, publications of doctoral students in refereed journals.

[50 minutes]

        Participants:

Name   Position

Prof. Marios Cariolou   Program Coordinator (BMR) & Teaching Staff

Prof. Kleopas Kleopa   Program Coordinator (NEURO) & Teaching Staff

Prof. Savvas Papacostas   Course Coordinator (NEURO 102) until Oct 2020 & Teaching Staff

Prof. George Spyrou   Course Coordinator (BMI 101) & Teaching Staff

Prof. George Tanteles   Course Coordinator (NEURO 103) & Teaching Staff

Prof. Kyproula Christodoulou   Course Coordinator (MG 103) & Teaching Staff

Dr. Lefteris Papathanasiou Course Coordinator (NEURO 102) starting Nov 2020 & Teaching Staff

Dr. Irene Sargiannidou   Teaching Staff

Dr. Elena Panayiotou Worth   Teaching Staff

Dr. Carsten Lederer   Course Coordinator (IMBS) & Teaching Staff

Dr. Evy Bashiardes   Teaching Staff

15:20 – 16:00

•   A meeting with students and graduates only (5 – 15 participants).

[40 minutes]

Participants:

Name   Position

Ms. Irene Moutsouri   Students' Representative 2019 & 2020

Mr. Aristotelis Karamousoulakis   Student MSc NEURO

Mr. Demos Kynigopoulos Student MSc NEURO

Ms. Loukia Hadjistylianou Student PhD NEURO

Ms. Sotiroula Afxenti   Student PhD NEURO

Ms. Sereen Abbara   Student MSc NEURO

Ms. Kristia Ioannou   Student MSc BMR

Mr. Ioannis Paraskevaidis Student MSc BMR

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

1 December 2020

11:30 – 12:00

• A meeting with members of the administrative staff.

[30 minutes]

Participants:

Name   Position

Mr. Marios Flouros   Finance and Administrative Director

Mr. Marinos Voukis   Education Office Manager

Ms. Andria Ioakem   Officer, PR and Promotions

Ms. Maria Lagou Officer, Operations and Admissions

12:00 – 12:15

• Discussion on the virtual visit of the premises of the School (i.e. library, computer labs, teaching rooms, research facilities).

[15 minutes]

        Participants:

Name   Position

Prof. Kyriacos Kyriacou   Dean

Prof. Kleopas Kleopa   Program Coordinator NEURO

Prof. Marios Cariolou   Program Coordinator BMR

Mr. Marinos Voukis   Education Office Manager

12:15 – 12:30

• A meeting with the Dean of the School, the programmes' Coordinators and the Education Office Manager - exit discussion (questions, clarifications).

[15 minutes]

        Participants:

Name   Position

Prof. Kyriacos Kyriacou   Dean

Prof. Kleopas Kleopa   Program Coordinator NEURO

Prof. Marios Cariolou   Program Coordinator BMR

Mr. Marinos Voukis   Education Office Manager

Notes:

• All staff must be available during the whole day of the online site visit for queries that may occur.

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

• The institution should provide very short presentations in the sessions needed, so that adequate time remains for questions by the EEC members and productive discussion.

Materials

in advance of our meeting the following links/documents were provided:

Document 07.14.266.002_200_1_application_programme_study_en.pdf
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18U_4hFuQtM5qRp6RWnwyUefsh_rvBl2W?usp=sharing

Neuroscience (PhD)

Document 07.14.266.007_200_1_application_programme_study_en.pdf
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Y65Xr9b6SjRX6eThnuGfjhUcBwr6iYdW?usp=sharing

Biomedical Research (MSc)

Document 07.14.266.001_200_1_application_programme_study_en.pdf
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AD3RGr6sTZQdjTJXjPPE9nUYqJFxhqz6?usp=sharing

Virtual tour of the School:
CING Intro.mp4
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19ax6XzzU4W7U3lFNM7cGlL91p7oprqMB?usp=sharing

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
André Uitterlinden	Professor of Complex Genetics	Erasmus University Medical Center, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Nicholas Wood	Professor of Neurology and Genetics	UCL, London, UK
Patrick Cras	Professor of Neurology	University of Antwerp, Belgium
Anna Konstantinou	MSc student	University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*

- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
    - *(a) sub-areas*
    - *(b) standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
    - *(c) some questions that EEC may find useful.*

- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*

- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*

- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*

- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

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

Findings

The Cyprus School of Molecular Medicine is the postgraduate school of the Cyprus Institute of Neurology & Genetics. As a Center of Excellence in basic and applied research in biomedical and clinical sciences, it combines its three pillars: services, research and education. The institute has a small inpatient ward and receives about 7500 patients per year. It provides high quality health care for Cypriote residents. The school has a long-standing collaboration with the medical schools in Cyprus. The external evaluation committee (EEC) was highly impressed by the professionalism, dedication, achievements, coherence, and the general positive atmosphere in the institute. Founded in 2012, the school provides both medical services and teaching in the genetics of neurology and biomedical Sciences. It is a private foundation but also supported by the government and half of the board members are appointed by the government. The teaching staff is involved in basic and clinical research.   The school is regularly visited by an international committee that evaluates the quality of the scientific output. The institute has about 2 million euros in funding, some by European granting agencies, some from the United States. They have MOU's with multiple international organizations. Unfortunately, the current evaluation was solely performed by an online "remote" evaluation due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so there was no "on-site" visit and evaluation.

Strengths

The institute is highly regarded in the local community, provides excellent services and has a collaboration with the medical schools in Cyprus. Teaching and research are clinically oriented. A major strength is its position in the Cyprus medical community, as an institute of excellence.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The school recruits internationally, but mainly from Greece and Cyprus and near Eastern countries. The school is starting to reach out to their alumni and it would be an opportunity to involve them more extensively in guest lectures. Fostering a strong relationship with alumni also creates an opening to potential future employers for the students. The school should also reflect on overall strategy of masters courses: is the most important aim increasing biomedical expertise? Does higher education in Cyprus need to build capacity for a PhD trajectory? Should the emphasis be on basic or clinical neurosciences? The school needs to develop vision and strategy on how the different masters programs fit together. Strategy should also involve marketing issues e.g. how do the programs fit in with other higher education programs in Cyprus, what type of competition is there and is any synergy possible?

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following 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	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

Findings
The Cyprus School of Molecular Medicine is the postgraduate school of the Cyprus Institute of Neurology & Genetics. Please refer to the introductory paragraph above for a full description.

Strengths
Our impression, supported by student feedback, is that the quality of the teaching is excellent.

The programme has put in place an excellent Preparatory Course for students without a biological/medical sciences background. This is most effective and much appreciated by all of the students. An entrance exam following the introductory course ensures that the students are well prepared.

The faculty to student ratio is close to 1:1 and therefore optimal to provide adequate coaching.

A "teach-the-teacher" program ensures that junior faculty is trained.

A wide range of research areas appears to be on offer.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
The school needs more flexibility for the program so that PhD students do not need to take some of the MSc level courses again. Most of the time, PhD students have sufficient self-reliance so that coaching of MSc students, courses outside their immediate expertise and other types of assignments could also count for the PhD program. The PhD students should be encouraged to present their work at least on three occasions, present their project to independent faculty as if it were a new application. Faculty should coach PhD students and prepare them for grant writing, which they will certainly do if pursuing a research career.

As the institute and the PhD program grows (new build) it may be helpful to consider if there are specific areas of expertise that should be a major focus for the budding PhD students, i.e. can the institute build on its enviable reputation of rare disease genetics and; or it may be the view that it should allow a broad range of biomedical programs to be propagated. Both options have their limitations and opportunities. Developing a clear overarching strategy for post-graduate biomedical education will be an advantage.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

3.Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Findings

The EEC was highly impressed by the professionalism, accomplishments, achievements, coherence of the teaching staff.

Strengths

There is a good age structure of the faculty and mentorship of younger faculty. The school has implemented a teach-the-teacher program and there is evaluation of teaching skills on a regular basis.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The school could try to involve some of the alumni and invite guest lecturers, e.g., from pharma and thereby introduce some of the potential future employers in the institute. When the school will be moving to the new building, there should be a reflection on organization of education, career possibilities for younger and established faculty and succession planning for faculty that has reached the emeritus status.

It may be worthwhile creating a mentorship program to enhance staff development.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

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

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

Findings

The students need to have a Bachelor degree from a recognized and accredited institution. There is a preparatory course which contains 9 lectures for candidates that come from outside the field of biomedicine, followed by an entrance exam. Communication and writing skills are evaluated through presentations and essays.

Strengths

Professional development of the students is evaluated and research integrity is promoted through courses on publication ethics and checks for plagiarism. All students have an academic and the research advisor even though the whole program is more research oriented. Emphasis is placed on transferable skills.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Mandatory attendance of courses should have a clear purpose. Distance learning, recording of lectures and formative evaluation should be promoted. Students should be encouraged to engage with broad topics. The faculty should consider career advice to students and prepare them for the post-doc stage.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following 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

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

5.Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

Findings
From the administrative personnel we obtained information on admission and support of students both in terms of scholarships but also housing and other activities (also "extra-curricular").

Strengths
The school provides support not only for housing but also in terms of migration permits. In case of trouble there is a confidence person and an academic advisor to turn to. There is a student council and student representatives are involved in all committees. Students with special needs can obtain additional time to pass the exam and also sometimes use of computer programs

The panel was impressed with the competence of the administrative support offered to the programs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
Even though the courses are evaluated by the students, there is no clear feedback from the faculty about what is done with the information. There is just hearsay from the next generation of students about what was changed in the course in order to improve the quality. The quality assurance program therefore needs to provide feedback to the students.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following 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	Complaint

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

Findings

For the PhD program the institute has one to two positions per year and there is a pre-interview evaluation phase assuring a good selection. In total they accepted 10 PhD students over a period of five years.

Strengths

There is excellent interaction between promotors and PhD students on a weekly basis. In the second year the PhD student presents a progress report and they also pass an examination. The number of PhD students is relatively low, so adequate coaching should be guaranteed.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

In the first year PhD students have mandatory courses 0101 and 102 which is a repetition of the courses they had in the Masters program. The faculty sees this as demotivating the students and they would certainly welcome some more flexibility in the PhD program. Bench cost should be contained, even though there are a number of fellowships reducing the cost for those students. When the school will grow and the PhD program expanded the school should consider making it more competitive, creating opportunities for incoming faculty while allowing established faculty to continue with a limited number of students.

Peer to peer learning for doctoral students may be a useful adjunct, for this modest sized cohort of students- sharing of expertise and structured journal clubs for example.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Compliant
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
6.3	Supervision and committees	Compliant

7. Additional for joint programmes *(ALL ESG)*

Findings

Not applicable

Strengths

Not applicable

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Not applicable

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
7.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	Not applicable
7.2	The joint programme	Not applicable

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar/// enqa.

D. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The EEC was favourably impressed by the quality of the staff, their dedication and their involvement in teaching, follow up and evaluation of the students. The school, its governing board and faculty should be commended for the development of this curriculum. The EEC hopes the school will flourish after having moved to the new building.

Most important final recommendations:

We recommend that the school further develops its marketing strategy.

With a growing number of students both on the master's level as well as in the PhD program, the school should try to maintain the high quality of research and education.

The school should turn towards Europe as well as the Middle-East for recruitment of new students as well as faculty.

Consideration as to the overall aims of the masters programs- are they to create the next generation of researchers through identification of the bets students for PhD?; Are they to create wealth and health for Cypriot population?; Are they to further develop the biomedical intellectual infrastructure of Cyprus?; or a mix of the above. Such strategic thinking will enable a clear plan as to what they want to achieve following the expansion in the new building.

A clear joined up strategy (there may be one that we did not see during our online visit) to allow clarity as to goals of post-graduate education- for example- how many masters to feed the PhD scheme, what size of PhD schemes and what areas to focus on etc could be helpful.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Prof. André Uitterlinden	
Prof. Nick Wood	
Prof. Patrick Cras	

Date: 13 December 2020