Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 23 October 2025

External Evaluation Report

(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**

The Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics

- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):**
- **Department/Sector:**
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Νευροεπιστήμη [4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS, Διδακτορικό (PhD)]

In English:

Neuroscience [4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)]

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: N/A
In English: N/A

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].

Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The onsite visit took place on the 21st of October 2025. The schedule included presentations, a tour of the facilities and discussions with staff, external stakeholders and students. It enabled the EEC to fully familiarise itself with the practices and discuss issues that staff and students may have. Presentations were made by the Provost, Prof Leonidas Phylactou, the Dean, Dr Petros Petrou and the coordinator of the MSc and PhD Neuroscience programs, Prof Kleopas Kleopa. Following the presentations, the EEC held meetings with the Heads of the relevant departments to discuss the specific programmes under review. The EEC committee then went on to observe an ongoing lecture before touring the different parts of the facility including the Amphitheatre & Mouse Facility, the Neurophysiology Department and EMG Labs, the Neurogenetics Department, the Neuropathology Department, the Neuroscience Department, the Bioinformatics Department, the Education Office and the Library. Sequential discussion sessions were then held with members of the teaching staff that are course coordinators, several external stakeholders, current and graduate students from the MSc and PhD programmes as well as Administrative staff members. Before concluding the visit, the EEC met with the Provost, the Dean, the MSc and PhD programme coordinators and the Education office manager to briefly summarize the findings and observations. In advance of the site visit, the EEC had been provided with copies of the Applications for Evaluation –Accreditation of the specific programmes of Study. Following the visit, the EEC received copies of all presentations made on the day.

A. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Nicoletta Kessaris	Professor in Neuroscience	University College London
Olivia O'Leary	Professor in Neuroscience	University College Cork, Ireland
Sabine Spijker	Professor in Neuroscience	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Christina Aresti	Medical Student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

B. 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.***

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

1.1 Policy for quality assurance
1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
1.3 Public information
1.4 Information management

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
  - *is a part of the strategic management of the program.*
  - *focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study program.*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*
    - *is developed with input from industry leaders and other stakeholders (i.e. industry leaders, professional bodies/associations, social partners, NGO's, governmental agencies) to align with professional standards.*
    - *integrates employer surveys to adapt to evolving workplace demands.*
    - *regularly utilizes alumni feedback for long-term effectiveness assessment.*
    - *is published and implemented by all stakeholders.*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*

- *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
- *Aligns course learning outcomes with student assessments using rubrics to ensure objectives are met.*
- *Connects each course's aims and objectives with the programme's overall aims and objectives through mapping, aligning with the institutional strategy.*
- *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
- *benefits from external expertise*
- *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
- *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
- *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
- *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
- *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
- *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
- *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*
    - collaborates with industry experts for curriculum development.
    - conducts joint reviews with external academic specialists to maintain academic rigor.
    - performs periodic assessments with external stakeholders to ensure continuous alignment with market needs.
    - establishes collaboration with international educational institutions or/& other relevant international bodies for a global perspective.
    - conducts regular feedback sessions with local community leaders for societal relevance.

1.3 Public information

Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*
  - *qualification awarded*
  - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *pass rates*
  - *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

  In addition, the program has established mechanisms of transparency & communication to ensure that
  - Professional bodies validate program descriptions and outcomes.
  - Community leaders actively participate in ensuring that the program's public information is relevant and resonates with the local and societal context.
  - External auditors review public information for accuracy & consistency vis-à-vis the actual implementation of the program.
  - Industry-specific & societal information is regularly updated with expert inputs.
  - Alumni testimonials are included for a realistic portrayal of program outcomes.

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed using specific indicators and data i.e:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*
  - *industry trend analysis.*
  - *feedback mechanisms from external partners/stakeholders*
  - *data exchanges with professional networks*
  - *employer insights concerning career readiness*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

- *How and to what extent are external stakeholders involved in the quality assurance process of the program?*
- *How is external stakeholder feedback gathered, analyzed and implemented?*
- *In what ways do external stakeholders assist in making program information publicly available?*
- *How do external stakeholders contribute to evaluating graduate success in the labor market and obtaining feedback on employment outcomes?*

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.

The Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics (CING) is a unique Institute on the island, established in 1990 with the purpose of providing services, research and education. The CING provides clinical services to Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot patients on the island. It is funded partly by the Cyprus government and partly through external funding. The Board of Directors includes scientists and layman members and is partly appointed by the Government.

CING offers MSc and PhD degrees in Medical Genetics, Molecular Medicine and Neuroscience, and an MSc in Biotechnology, all based on the expertise of the CING staff. The mission of the Institute is the pursuit of excellence in education for the benefit of society.

The Institute is currently housed in the original CING building which is fully equipped with state-of-the-art facilities that are maintained through core funding. The School, along with some of the services and research teams will soon move into an adjacent newly-built building that will provide significantly more space and an opportunity to expand the current student intake. New Teams already hired will also be housed in the new building, bringing significant new expertise and expanding the teaching possibilities offered by the Institute.

Strengths

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

- *The School has a very clear governance structure, including a coordinator for the programme of study.*
- *The programme is accredited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation, and is evaluated by an external committee every 5 years ensuring the highest standards of education are maintained.*
- *The School has strong collaborations with numerous and diverse external stakeholders including other Higher Education establishments on the island and abroad, as well as with Industry, giving the opportunity to students to experience teaching, research and work placements outside the Institute. External stakeholders are also involved in teaching on the programme, providing additional expertise. Additional stakeholders include the NGO/patient advocacy association, the Cyprus Muscular Dystrophy Association.*
- *The School has a large number of alumni (355) with whom it maintains close links and has established an alumni committee who provide valuable support for the current students.*
- *The School has a very supportive approach towards the students, with a ratio of 1:3 staff:student ratio, ensuring that any problems or issues arising are dealt with efficiently. All*

students are assigned both a research advisor and an academic advisor, providing a strong support system.

- *Students and staff, from administrators to teachers and course organizers, have a very positive view and are proud to be part of the School and the CING. This widespread satisfaction, a reflection of strong governance, ensures program success.*
- *The program provides excellent preparation for sustainable employment, achieving very high employability after graduation. Graduates move onto several different employment (See section 6)*
- *Exams are adequately planned and have a good correspondence with the level of the programme.*
- *The structure of the programme is fixed but lecture content is updated every year, ensuring all material is up to date. Major changes to the programme (>10%), taking into account several different parameters, are always subject to approval by the government agency.*
- *Information on the program is readily accessible on the website https://www.cing.ac.cy/en/education/postgraduate-programs/msc-postgraduate-programs and the downloadable prospectus found therein where governance, infrastructure, selection criteria, course structure, admission, points of contact, facilities, fees, scholarships, international students and mobility are included.*
- *The PhD programme has been running successfully for several years. Current students and alumni have a very positive view on their experience at CING.*
- *Over the course of the last 10 years, 20 PhD students have enrolled in the Neuroscience programme. From these, 7 have graduated thus far, and 4 more will graduate in the current academic year (2025-2026), and 3 have withdrawn for personal reasons. Currently, there are 10 students participating in the programme.*

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.

There are only two minor areas of improvement under the sub-area Public information:

- *Graduate employment information for PhD students could be made publicly available perhaps in the form of a flow chart with % of graduates going into different occupations. This will help marketing and prospective and current PhD students.*
- *PhD alumni testimonials could also be included in the website.*

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
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)*

Sub-areas

2.2 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology
2.3 Practical training
2.4 Student assessment

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

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *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.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *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.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*
- *Detailed schedules in course materials are included, explicitly stating the expected hours for lectures, self-study, and group projects, ensuring transparency in time allocation.*
- *A system is integrated where each learning activity is assigned a weight proportional to its importance and time requirement, aiding in balanced curriculum design.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

- *The expected hours for different components of practical training, such as lab work, fieldwork, and internships are clearly documented in the training manuals*
- *A weighting system is applied to various practical training elements, reflecting their significance in the overall learning outcomes and student workload.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *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.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*
  - *The time allocation for each assessment task isexplicitly stated in course outlines, ensuring students are aware of the expected workload.*
  - *A balanced assessment weighting strategy is implemented, considering the complexity and learning objectives of each task, to ensure fair evaluation of student performance.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*

- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings

The CING's PhD Neuroscience programme promotes academic excellence, educating students on significant issues in neuroscience. It blends taught content with research and practical work, aligning student workload with learning outcomes and encouraging active learning.

The PhD curriculum includes mandatory courses on basic Neuroscience topics in 1) Cellular and Molecular Neuroscience, 2) Brain and Behaviour, and 3) Neurosciences and Neurogenetics that are also part of the MSc programme. In addition, elective courses provided by accompanying MSc programmes of the CING are offered, enabling students to broaden their knowledge. Courses consist of tutorials and guided independent study; a typical course runs two 90-minute lectures/week + one 60-minute tutorial/week (≈26 lectures and 13 tutorials per semester). This structure supports active learning and small-group tutorial work.

Practical training is deeply integrated into the programme, and is a formal part of the PhD. Projects are carried out in state-of-the-art CING laboratories and clinics, giving hands-on lab, diagnostic and translational experience and close supervision by scientists and clinicians in real work settings.

Assessment (courses, exams and research project) is built around the ECTS workload and learning outcomes, combining coursework, exams and project work; it aims to be transparent and aligned with student-centred learning, though detailed methods vary and further development is recognised. Assessments correspond to the European Qualification Framework.

There is support for teachers regarding new methodology for interactive and efficient teaching. There is a plan for offering further continuous professional development opportunities in teaching in the coming year.

Strengths

- *Small-class, interactive environment and personalised supervision*
  - *1:3 ratio staff:student ratio*
  - *Teachers integrate students' feedback on courses over the past few years*
  - *Most courses have a similar assessment format consisting of a mid-term exam (30%), a presentation (10%), and a final exam (60%)*
- *Internationalisation & student mobility*
  - *Mixed local and international student intake: 3 international students and 7 Cypriots in the current set of 10 PhD students*
- *Well-equipped labs and real world practical environment*
  - *Excellent integration of research, education and clinical/diagnostic service*
  - *Alignment with industry/market needs and employability focus*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Students seem generally very satisfied with the programme based on the interviews, and student satisfaction scores of courses. Possible areas of improvement include:

Move towards uniform teaching and examination formats across the different courses

The following points are based on interviews with students, exams viewed and student satisfaction scores:

- The committee observed that there is a wide range of total number of questions asked per exam. For example, 24 multiple choice (MC) & 13 short-essay questions (Neuro101, NEURO101: Cellular and Molecular Neuroscience) or 18 MC & 29 short-essay questions (MM101, Molecular Basis of Monogenic Disease), both for 3 hour exams. It would be good practice to ensure that the total number of questions and the ratio of MC vs short-essay questions is more uniform among courses.

- It would be good practice for teachers to check each other's MC / short-essay exam questions, and to make this an official check-point. Likewise, model answers (e.g. key points that should be in the answer) should be provided for all short-essay questions for the purposes of double

marking and resolving potential student appeals. For presentations, grading rubrics should be used; these rubrics should be available to the students in advance.

- If not already practiced, there should be a dual marking system for all assessments including, short-essay exam questions and presentations. This will minimise subjective marking.

Implement formal accommodations for diverse learners

- Consider making available non-downloadable recordings of all lectures via the CING digital learning environment (Extranet) after the classes. Recordings are not intended to replace attendance, but to support learning after class. This is especially important for diverse learners (e.g. dyslexia, ADHD or autism).

- The programme team provided the panel with examples of how exam accommodations (e.g. extra time, private room etc.) for students with documented additional/diverse learning needs have been provided. However, it should be included in the student handbook that students may request appropriate accommodations (upon medical certification), which will be assessed by the programme team and if appropriate, approved.

Extend support and education on the use of artificial intelligence

- *Introduce a brief course or training program on artificial intelligence (AI) at the start of the programme focusing on the appropriate and ethical use of AI for academic purposes.*
- *Faculty should also receive AI training and how they can effectively use AI for educational purposes.*

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
2	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)*

Sub-areas

3.1 **Teaching staff recruitment and development**
3.2 Teaching staff number and status
3.3 **Synergies of teaching and research**

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *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.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *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.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *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).*

- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*
- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

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.

Teaching Staff Recruitment and Development

The PhD Neuroscience programme is overseen by distinguished faculty members, including:

Professor Leonidas A. Phylactou, Provost
Dr Petros Petrou, Dean
Professor Kleopas Kleopa, Coordinator of MSc Neuroscience programme

The programme boasts diverse and experienced teaching staff, with faculty holding various academic ranks [e.g. (assistant / associate) Professors, academic staff (e.g. post-docs)]. The addition of new research groups when the School moves into the new building will boost the educational and research missions and will give more students the opportunity to carry out their PhD studies at CING. CING's teaching staff meet the national standards for higher-education teaching (e.g., holding doctorates, active research, sufficient academic status).

Teaching Staff Number and Status

The PhD Neuroscience programme is supported by a substantial number of full-time academic staff, ensuring a low student-to-faculty ratio conducive to personalized instruction and mentorship. The faculty comprises individuals at various academic ranks, contributing to a rich diversity of perspectives and expertise within the programme.

Synergies of Teaching and Research

Faculty members are actively involved in pioneering research in neuroscience, providing students with mentorship and guidance in their research endeavors. As such, the teaching of the PhD Neuroscience programme is very well connected with the research lines of its members. The curriculum is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of neuroscience, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical research experience in the research projects. Students benefit from daily interactions in a professional work environment that combines research and services alongside education, preparing them for employment through exposure to cutting-edge research.

Each taught course is hosted by a specific staff member, who serves as the main lecturer to ensure consistency and a clear academic profile for the course. A second lecturer contributes specialised expertise in specific subject areas. Courses are further enriched by guest lectures from visiting academics and professionals from other institutions in Cyprus and abroad — including CING alumni — who bring additional perspectives and up-to-date insights from their fields. During 2021 - Jan 2024, 46 distinguished lecturers delivered presentations to CING students.The programme also benefits from extensive collaborations with medical schools and universities across Cyprus, strengthening the integration of research and clinical practice.

Strengths

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

Good ratio of student:teachers in combined MSc/PhD course programme

- *1:3 ratio of student:academic staff*
- *1:1 ratio of student:academic advisors*
- *CING academic teaching staff has a good gender representation (11 female:15 male)*

Approachable lecturers

- *Lecturers are involved in the programme and often stay after lectures to accommodate additional questions being asked.*
- *Teachers create a good atmosphere and there is always sufficient help for any next steps to be taken in the curriculum.*

- *Several mechanisms are in place for obtaining student feedback: end of course survey, degree exit survey, a feedback box, meetings with class representatives/ current students/graduates, and there are student representatives on decision-making*

committees. During our onsite discussions, both students and teachers provided examples of how teachers have implemented student feedback for courses over the past few years.

Other teaching and training:

- *New students undergo training for health and safety (e.g. chemicals, biohazard, fire)*

High research quality:

- *Very active research environment, with an output of 90 peer reviewed publications per year*
- *Academic Staff members are frequently invited to deliver lectures and research seminars abroad, and participate in student and academic examination committees, further enhancing international collaboration and academic exchange.*
- *State-of-the-art facilities supporting cutting-edge research teaching of international standards*
- *Extensive participation in collaborative European research consortia and >34 networks & professional societies e.g. European Research Networks, COST actions, Responsible Open science in Europe (ROSiE), Federation of European Federation Societies.*
- *Extensive local and international funding (35 competitive research programs currently running)*

Extensive enterprise activities:

- *Patents*
- *Spin-off company*
- *Licensing*
- *Business incubator*
- *Clinical Trials*

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

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

The course part of the PhD programme and its teachers have a very good profile based on the interviews with faculty and students. Possible areas of improvement include:

- *Introduce peer-observation practices for teaching staff*
- *For staff who did not undertake any training or education in English, it would be advisable to introduce proof of English proficiency (C1-C2 level).*
- *Newly-appointed staff and staff wishing to refresh their teaching methods should undertake training/refresher courses towards a teaching certificate. See below for possibilities:*

- *Pedagogical Formation Certificate Programs. These programs aim to provide training in effective teaching behaviors, student-centered education, and respect for socio-cultural differences*
- *The European Association for Higher Education Accreditation (EAHEA) offers teacher certification that is recognized internationally. This certification is particularly beneficial for those aiming to teach at other renowned academic institutions*

- *For ongoing education of staff, include an active bystander workshop to empower staff to recognize, challenge, and prevent inappropriate, discriminatory, or harmful behaviour in a respectful and safe way.*

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
3	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)*

Sub-areas

4.1 **Student admission, processes and criteria**
4.2 **Student progression**
4.3 **Student recognition**
4.4 **Student certification**

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *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.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
    - *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*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

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.

The admission requirements for the study programme are appropriate (see section 6 for specifics).

The school has a policy of recognition of prior learning and credit transfers. Students that have completed courses with similar content can apply to the Academic Committee for ECTS credits.

Graduates from non-related fields of study are considered for admission but are required to complete and pass the Preparatory Course "Introduction to Molecular Biomedical Sciences" prior to undertaking the shared MSc/PhD Programme course programme.

The admission rate varies annually, and is mostly dependent on resources and funding available for PhD projects.

After passing the PhD programme, graduates receive a formal document stating the level of the qualification and its context.

The school's practices align with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention which facilitates recognition of academic qualifications across borders.

Strengths

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

- *Diversity in nationalities of the applicants [Cyprus (majority), Greece, Syria, Lebanon].*
- *Students receive a Transcript of Records (formal records consisting of courses, credits and outcomes) in line with European and international standards.*
- *See also section 6 (additional for doctoral programmes)*

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.

No areas for improvement identified.

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
4	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)*

Sub-areas

5.1 **Teaching and Learning resources**
5.2 **Physical resources**
5.3 **Human support resources**
5.4 **Student support**

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *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.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *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.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*
- *Students receive support in research-led teaching through engagement in research projects, mentorship from research-active faculty, and access to resources that enhance their research skills and critical engagement with current studies.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*

- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

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.

Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources are provided to students. These support achievement of the programme objectives and are fit for purpose.

Modes of learning and teaching are sufficiently flexible. Teaching and learning is conducted through the medium of English allowing mobility and internationalization of the programme.

Current resources for the number of students admitted to the programme are sufficient and there are plans for expansion which will be supported by addition of new physical space and additional faculty recruitment.

Students are fully informed about services available to them.

The human support resources are fit for purpose and are to be highly commended.

Faculty and administrative staff commitment to the student experience was explicitly apparent upon the site visit, and students spoke highly of this.

The profile of the CING (which provides national clinical, diagnostic, and lab services as well as cutting-edge research) provides an excellent environment for PhD students that is unique and attractive.

Students receive support in research-led teaching through engagement in high quality research projects, mentorship from research-active faculty, and access to resources that enhance their research skills and critical engagement with current studies.

Strengths

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

Expansion of physical resources:

- *A new building will provide additional teaching and research space.*
- *The expansion will support greater PhD student intake and growth in human support resources (provided sufficient funding).*

New research teams:

- *Four new research teams have been recruited. Two of these are in the neuroscience field, strengthening the programme's research capacity.*

Student experience and support:

- *Meetings with current and former students showed that the diverse student population feels strongly supported in their studies.*
- *Students can choose between full-time and part-time study options, enabling some to maintain employment while studying.*
- *International students praised the support structures that help them relocate to Cyprus and integrate into the school community.*

Access to information and materials:

- *Students receive a handbook with key academic and administrative information.*
- *All details on syllabus, assessment, and timetables are provided online via the interactive teaching environment before the academic year starts.*
- *Lecture notes are made available online 1-2 days before each class*

Staff-student ratio and academic guidance:

- *The programme benefits from a high staff-to-student ratio (1:3).*
- *Each student is assigned both a personal Academic Advisor and Research Advisor(s). See also section 6.*

Additional institutional support:

- *Students receive assistance from the Education Office, which includes several staff members*
- *Students have access to dedicated librarian support.*

PhD Student Outward Mobility is supported via 3-4 month visits

- *e.g. University of Crete, Greece, University of Milan, UMC Utrecht 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.

Implement formal accommodations for diverse learners

- See areas of improvement in section 2.

Extend support and education on the use of artificial intelligence

- See areas of improvement in section 2.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
5	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)*

Sub-areas

6.1 **Selection criteria and requirements**
6.2 **Proposal and dissertation**
6.3 **Supervision and committees**

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
  - *the examinations*
  - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
  - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
  - *the chapters that are contained*
  - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
  - *the minimum word limit*
  - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*
  - *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - *support for writing research papers*
  - *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Are the criteria reflected in dissertation samples?*

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.

Selection of candidates and projects

- *Applicants to the PhD programme must submit an online application, which includes a Bachelor's degree in a relevant field, a High School Leaving Certificate or equivalent, and an English language certificate (e.g., IELTS) if their prior education was not conducted in English. Additionally, two recommendation letters are required. While a MSc degree is not mandatory, most applicants hold one, as it enhances their chances of admission. Following evaluation by the Admissions Committee, candidates are assessed for their suitability through an interview, after which they are either invited to join the programme or notified of rejection via email. This procedure is applied uniformly to all applicants, irrespective of nationality or background and is in line with international standards.*

- *Students select their project at the outset of the PhD on the basis of their preferences and availability of PhD positions.*

PhD supervision

- *Students start their PhD thesis work under the supervision of a single or several Research Advisors. Research Advisors must be at least one of the three: a) a faculty member with a PhD and/or MD, b) a non-faculty Head of a Department at the Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics, c) staff of the Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics with a PhD and or MD with at least 3 years of post-doctoral experience and after approval from his or her Head of Department. For details see section 8.6-8.8 of the student's handbook.*

PhD thesis progression, submission and assessment

- *At the end of the second year (after obtaining 60 ECTS research experience), the student is evaluated by a PhD Thesis Progress Examination Committee (see section 8.7 of Student Handbook). This committee does not overlap with the final thesis examination committee, with the exception of the student's advisor.*
- *A mandatory review of progress occurs annually, which involves a brief written report by the PhD Student and his/her Research Advisor(s). This ensures progress is satisfactory and, if not, to ensure that corrective actions are promptly taken.*
- *The final PhD thesis examination committee is composed of three members, 1) the student's advisor, 2) a CING faculty member, who will be chairing the Committee and 3) an external assessor expert in the field of the thesis who will be a faculty member of a University or a group head of a research institute. For details see section 8.8 of the Student Handbook.*
- *Submission of the final thesis requires at least one first author peer reviewed publication (accepted or published original research paper). The thesis itself includes all experiments conducted for that publication as well as any additional related work generated during the course of the project.*
- *Clear and specific guidelines for the writing of the dissertation, the plagiarism check system, and thesis submission to the library are provided in the Regulations of the Code of Practice for Research Project and/or the Faculty and Student Handbooks.*
- *Stages of completion: average years of completion 4.5 and maximum 6 years (full-time). Criteria required for examination and obtaining the PhD degree are published in the regulations of the code of practice for research projects and/or the faculty and student handbooks.*

Career path

- *PhD students expressed a desire for more training in teaching. The PhD programme accommodated this by searching collaboration with the local universities, as they teach at BSc level. Students have indicated interest in elective teaching qualification courses, which would not only enhance their instructional skills but also improve their overall public speaking and presentation abilities.*

- *Students graduating from CING are automatically considered as members of the CING alumni association. Among the career paths of graduated PhD students are postdoctoral positions (Cyprus, USA), health care facilities with medical services (Cyprus), pharmaceutical companies (Greece).*

Strengths

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

- *Unique environment of CING exposing graduates to national diagnostic and clinical services as well as cutting-edge research programmes with clinical impact.*
- *The student and faculty handbooks, and the Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Projects document show good practise and clear guidelines*
- *A strong safety-net structure is in place to ensure student progression and satisfaction.*
- *The average duration for completing a PhD project at CING is approximately 4.5 years, which represents an excellent outcome by international standards.*
- *It is apparent that students surpass the minimum publication requirements.*
- *PhD students present their work at both national and international conferences, participating with poster and oral presentations, including online events (especially during COVID years). Additionally, during the annual PhD Day, students share their research findings with the local scientific community as well as the general public.*

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 educational content of the PhD programme substantially overlaps with that of the MSc programme. Consequently, MSc graduates from CING who are admitted to the PhD programme are exempt from repeating the mandatory courses and may enter directly into the second year. Plans are currently in place to reformat the PhD course to take this into account. Suggestions from the EEC include the introduction of extended soft-skills courses to enhance PhD student skills and employability, courses from other universities in Cyprus, or online courses, as considered appropriate by the PhD course organizers.*
- *Include an active bystander workshop for PhD students as transferable skills as this is an increasingly common and highly effective training designed to empower students to recognize, challenge, and prevent inappropriate, discriminatory, or harmful behaviour in a respectful and safe way.*
- *In the handbook section 2 (Policy for supervision and evaluation) we recommend changing the following sentence by removing "for the good name of the CING" - "The aim is to ensure*

the smooth operation of all academic activities and safeguard the interest of all parties, for the good name of the CING."

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

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

C. 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 highly impressed by the professionalism of staff, the quality of the degree programmes, the satisfaction of current and past students and their high employability. The staff should be congratulated on achieving high standards throughout. With the movement of the school to the new building and the expansion of programmes, the EEC hopes that the school will maintain these standards.

The recommendations of the EEC fall under six categories:

1. *Further enhance teaching standards by introducing peer observations, teaching courses and uniform English standards*
2. *Further improve assessments by making them uniform across all courses, providing model answers and rubrics and enforcing a dual marking system in all assessments*
3. *Implement formal accommodations for diverse learners by providing recorded lectures and making students aware of the possibility of accommodations*
4. *Provide extended support and education on the use of artificial intelligence*
5. *Enhance programme marketing by making publicly available the employability and career directions of graduates.*

6. *Enrich the PhD curriculum through the introduction of advanced and specialised courses, enhanced workshop-based transferable skills training, and expanded opportunities for professional development.*

D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	*Signature*
Professor Nicoletta Kessaris	
Professor Sabine Spijker	
Professor Olivia O'Leary	
Ms Christina Aresti	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 23 October 2025