Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 28/02/2025

External Evaluation Report

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

- **Higher Education Institution:** The Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** n/a
- **Department/ Sector:** Private Institution of Higher Education
- **Program of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

  In Greek: Διδακτορικό στην Ιατρική Γενετική
- **In English:** Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Medical Genetics
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Program'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].

The comments of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) are all presented in brown colour.

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The site visit took place according to the following schedule:

08:30 – 08:35

- A brief introduction of the members of the External Evaluation Committee

- Chair: Professor Enza Maria Valente, University of Pavia
- Member: Professor Hannelore Ehrenreich, Georg August University Göttingen
- Member: André Uitterlinden, Erasmus University
- Student member: Stephania Masouri, University of Cyprus

08:35– 09:30

- A meeting with the Rector/Head(s) of the Institution and/or the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs
  - **Short presentation of the Institution**

- A meeting with the Dean of the School, the Head(s) of the relevant department and all faculty members
  - **Short presentation of the School's / Department's structure**
  - Mission and strategic planning (including SWOT analysis)
  - Connecting with society
  - Development Processes –Action Plan

- A meeting with the members of the Internal Evaluation Committee
  - *Q&A Session*

Name(s) of presenter(s)/participant(s):

Full Name	Position
Prof Leonidas Phylactou	Provost
Prof Kyproula Christodoulou	Dean
Prof Carolina Sismani	MEDGEN Coordinator
Dr Carsten Lederer	MOLMED Coordinator

Members of the Internal Quality Assurance Committee

Full Name
Prof Leonidas Phylactou
Prof Kyproula Christodoulou
Prof Petros Karayiannis
Prof George Spyrou
Dr Carsten Lederer
Ms Marios Flouros
Ms Maria Theocharidou
Ms Maria Lagou
Students' representative

09:30-10:30 – Tour in premises

Name(s) of participant(s):

Full Name	Position
Carolina Sismani	MEDGEN Program Coordinator
Carsten Lederer	MOLMED Program Coordinator
Maria Lagou	Education Office Manager

Schedule

09:30-09:35 Amphitheatre and Room L10
09:35-09:45 Cytogenetics and Genomics Department
09:45-09:55 Neurogenetics Department
09:55-10:05 Molecular Genetics Thalassaemia Department
10:05-10:15 Bioinformatics
10:15-10:25 Cancer Genetics, Therapeutics & Ultrastructural Pathology Department
10:25-10:30 Library and Education Office

10:30-10:45

- *Coffee Break*

10:45-12:15

Program 1 & 2: *Molecular Medicine, MSc & PhD*

- A meeting with the **Head(s) of the relevant department** and the **Coordination Committee** of the program.
  - Discussion regarding the content and the standards of the program of study about: (**EEC Report / Assessment Area 1** - Study program and study program's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9))
    - intended learning outcomes and ECTS
    - learning opportunities available to the students
    - qualification awarded
    - feedback processes for the improvement of the department
  - Discussion regarding the Information for the effective management of the program of study (**EEC Report / Assessment Area 1** - Study program and study program's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9))
  - Discussion on the process of teaching and learning and the student-centred teaching methodology, the practical trainings and the student assessment (Assessment Area 2 - Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment -ESG 1.3)
    - Observation on the material and discussion on the methodology i.e. students' assessments and equipment used in teaching and learning i.e. software, hardware, materials, online platforms, teaching material, evaluation methods, projects, samples of written examinations/thesis.
  - Discussion on the Student admission, processes and criteria, progression, recognition and certification (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 4** - Student admission, progression, recognition and certification ESG 1.4) / (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 6** - Additional for doctoral programs (ALL ESG))
    - selection/admission criteria

- students' key performance indicators
- profile of the students' population
- students' satisfaction on learning resources and support available
- students' progression, success and drop-out rates
- career paths of graduates / graduate employment information

Name(s) of presenter(s)/participant(s):

Full Name	Position
Dr Carsten Lederer	MOLMED Program Coordinator, MM101 Course Coordinator
Prof Carolina Sismani	MEDGEN Program Coordinator, MG102 Course Coordinator
Prof Kyproula Christodoulou	Dean

12:15-12:30 MM103/NEURO103 Lecture Observation

12:30-13:30 *Lunch Break*

13:30-15:00

Program 3 & 4: *Medical Genetics MSc & PhD*

- A meeting with the **Head(s) of the relevant department** and the **Coordination Committee** of the program.
  - Discussion regarding the content and the standards of the program of study about: (**EEC Report / Assessment Area 1** - Study program and study program's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9))
    - intended learning outcomes and ECTS
    - learning opportunities available to the students
    - qualification awarded
    - feedback processes for the improvement of the department
  - Discussion regarding the Information for the effective management of the program of study (**EEC Report / Assessment Area 1** - Study program and study program's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9))
  - Discussion on the process of teaching and learning and the student-centred teaching methodology, the practical trainings and the student assessment (Assessment Area 2 - Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment -ESG 1.3)
    - Observation on the material and discussion on the methodology i.e. students' assessments and equipment used in teaching and learning i.e. software, hardware, materials, online platforms, teaching material, evaluation methods, projects, samples of written examinations/thesis.
  - Discussion on the Student admission, processes and criteria, progression, recognition and certification (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 4** - Student admission, progression, recognition and certification ESG 1.4) / (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 6** - Additional for doctoral programs (ALL ESG))
    - selection/admission criteria
    - students' key performance indicators
    - profile of the students' population
    - students' satisfaction on learning resources and support available
    - students' progression, success and drop-out rates
    - career paths of graduates / graduate employment information

Name(s) of presenter(s)/participant(s):

Full Name	Position
Prof Carolina Sismani	MEDGEN Program Coordinator, MG102 Course Coordinator
Dr Carsten Lederer	MOLMED Program Coordinator, MM101 Course Coordinator
Prof Kyproula Christodoulou	Dean

15:00-16:00

- A meeting **ONLY** with members of the teaching staff **on each course** for all the years of study (QA session).
  - Self-Presentation-(i.e. academic qualifications, publications, research interests, research activity, compliance with Staff ESG), on any other duties in the institution and teaching obligations in other programs.
  - Discussion on the design, structure and content of each course and its implementation, the criteria used for the development of the program (i.e., methodologies, selected bibliography, students' workload, compliance with Teaching ESG).
  - Discussion on the learning outcomes, the content and the assessment of each course and their compliance with the level of the program according to the EQF.
  - Discussion of prescribed and recommended reading for each module.
  - Discussion on assessment criteria, samples of final exams or other teaching material and resources. Assessment criteria, processes and practices refer to both summative and on-going formative assessment and should be examined vis-à-vis the structure and content of the program and each individual course.

  (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 2** - Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3) / (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 3** – Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5))

  [60 minutes]

Name(s) of the teaching staff:

Full Name	Position
Dr Carsten Lederer	MM101 Course Coordinator
Prof Andreas Hadjisavvas	MM102 Course Coordinator
Prof Leonidas Phylactou	MM103 Course Coordinator
Dr Stavroula Xenophontos	MG101 Course Coordinator
Prof Carolina Sismani	MG102 Course Coordinator
Prof Kyproula Christodoulou	MG103 Course Coordinator
Dr Petros Petrou	MG104 Course Coordinator
Prof George Spyrou	BMI Course Coordinator
Dr George Krashias	MVI Course Coordinator
Prof Kleopas Kleopa	NEURO101 Course Coordinator
Dr Andreas Koupparis	NEURO102 Course Coordinator
Dr Elena Panagiotou Worth	NEURO103 Course Coordinator
Dr Jan Richter	BT102 & BT103 Course Coordinator

16:00-16:10 Coffee Break

16:10-16:50

- A meeting with **ONLY** with the External Stakeholders **for each course**.
  (**EEC Report/Assessment Area 4** - Student admission, progression, recognition and certification ESG 1.4)/ (**EEC Report/Assessment Area 1** Study program and study program's design and development - ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)
  1. ESs' input on the development of the institution's quality assurance policies.
  2. ESs' input on the design and development, as well as on the on-going monitoring and review of the program of study.
  3. ESs' involvement on the periodic assessments to ensure continuous alignment with market needs.
  4. ESs' sought-out input to review and to update public information for purposes of accuracy.
  5. ESs' contribution in aligning the program with the European Qualifications Framework, and in assessing the delivery of its effectiveness.
  6. ESs' sought-out input to provide:
     - industry trend analysis
     - data exchanges via professional networks
     - employer insights concerning career readiness of graduates.
  7. ESs' input on the program's potential employability of its graduates.

Name(s) of participant(s):

Full Name	Position
Prof Kyriacos Felekkis	Dean, School of Life and Health Sciences, University of Nicosia
Prof Apostolos Zaravinos	Chairperson, Department of Life Sciences, European University Cyprus
Dr Vicky Nicolaidou	President, Society of Biological Sciences in Cyprus
Miltos Miltiadous	President, Pancyprian Thalassaemia Association
Dr Demetris Koutalianos	Molecular Department Supervisor, SYNLAB Cyprus
Kyriacos Matsis	CEO, Lifeline
Dr Stefi Stavrinou	Senior Embryologist, Isis Clinic

16:50 – 17:30

- A meeting with **ONLY** students and graduates **for each course** (8 – 15 participants)
  (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 1** Study program and study program's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2,1.3 1.7, 1.8, 1.9. 1.10), **Assessment Area 2** - Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment -ESG 1.3) **EEC Report /Assessment Area 4** - Student admission, progression, recognition and certification ESG 1.4)/ (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 5** - Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6))/ (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 6** - Additional for doctoral programs (ALL ESG))

Name(s) of participant(s):

Full Name	Position
Panayiotis Myrianthopoulos	Alumni, MSc MOLMED
Panagiota Papasavva	Alumni, MSc and PhD MOLMED
Constantia Aristidou	Alumni, PhD MEDGEN

Ioanna Charalambous	Alumni, MSc MEDGEN
Mohammed Azzam	PhD MOLMED
Antri Florentia Romanou	PhD MEDGEN
Lucy Shiahabian	PhD MOLMED
Hriddhi Chakraborty	MSc MOLMED
Rawan	MSc MEDGEN
Ioana Grigoras	MSc MOLMED

17:30-17:50

- A meeting **exclusively** with members from the Administrative Staff (QA session)
  (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 4** - Student admission, progression, recognition and certification ESG 1.4)/ (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 5** - Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)) / (**EEC Report /Assessment Area 6** - Additional for doctoral programs (ALL ESG))

Name(s) of participant(s):

Full Name	Position
Marios Flouros	Director of Finance and Administration
Maria Lagou	Education Office Manager
Andria Ioakem	Administrative Services Officer (Marketing and Promotions)
Iris Vogazianou	Administrative Services Officer (Admissions & Operations)
Maria Ioannou Avgousti	Administrative Services Officer (Operations)
Michalis Koumas	Administrative Services Officer (Technical Support)
Maria Theocharidou	Health, Safety and Quality Officer

17:50-18:05

- **Working Coffee Break**
  A meeting ONLY between the EEC members, to sum up and discuss for any additional clarifications needed, before the Exit Discussion

18:05-18:35

- **Exit Discussion** with the Dean of the School, the Head(s) of the relevant department, the coordinator(s) of the program(s) - and the Director(s)_ of Academic Quality and Compliance (questions, clarifications).

Name(s) of participant(s):

Full Name	Position
Prof Leonidas Phylactou	Provost
Prof Kyproula Christodoulou	Dean
Prof Carolina Sismani	MEDGEN Programs Coordinator
Dr Carsten Lederer	MOLMED Programs Coordinator
Maria Lagou	Education Office Manager

External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Enza Maria Valente	Professor of Medical Genetics, Head, Complex Unit of Medical Genetics	University of Pavia, Pavia, Italy
Hannelore Ehrenreich	Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry, Head of Clinical Neuroscience	Georg August University, Göttingen, Germany
André Uitterlinden	Professor of Complex Genetics, Head, Laboratory of Populations Genomics	Erasmus Medical Center, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Stefania Masouri	Student, MSc in Biomedical Sciences	University of Cyprus

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 program of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*
- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the program of study as a whole.*
- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

1. Study program and study program'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 program 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 program of study:*
  - *is designed with overall program 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 program'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 program 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 program 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 program*
- *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 program 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 program 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 programs*
  - *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 program and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study program'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 program remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study program are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the program correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study program 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 program?*
- *How does the study program 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 program (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 program analogous to other European programs 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 program (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the program 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 program 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 PhD in Medical Genetics is a structured and research-driven program, awarding 240 ECTS and following European Higher Education Standards. The curriculum includes a first year of mandatory and elective courses (50 ECTS), and three years focused on research (190 ECTS). The program is designed to balance theoretical instruction with hands-on laboratory research, ensuring graduates acquire specialized knowledge and advanced research expertise. The development process involves internal review committees and external evaluators, ensuring periodic updates to maintain scientific relevance.

Strengths

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

The PhD program follows a structured quality assurance system overseen by the Academic Committee and the School Council. Periodic evaluations allow a continuous alignment with international standards. Student feedback is regularly collected through course evaluations and surveys, and this feedback is taken into account when planning curriculum updates. The program adheres to European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and awards 240 ECTS.
The program includes latest scientific advancements in genetics, bioinformatics, and medical research, with a wide range of courses covering basic and advanced knowledge. It integrates multiple disciplines (genetics, molecular biology, bioinformatics, and clinical applications), ensuring a comprehensive education and career prospects.
Information about the PhD program is publicly available on the website.
Several collaborations are in place with universities and research centers both locally and regionally.
The EEC was impressed by the detailed and informative handbook (Postgraduate Education 2025-2026) which clearly outlines the courses and study programs, policies, assessment criteria, and academic regulations. This handbook is given to every student enrolling in the program.
Graduate employment outcomes and career progression are monitored to refine the program, and feedback from previous alumni is regularly collected.

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 noticed that a few relevant topics are well represented in the program but in a rather fragmented way, and across different courses. To address this, the program could benefit from a modest revision attempting at making it more structured. For example, separate modules could be offered for the following topics: 1) forensic genetics; 2) personalized medicine; 3) stem cell biology and related models; 4)

epidemiology; 5) AI applications (this is already considered but could be further expanded and formally included in the program). The EEC believes that these changes can make the program more appealing for prospective students and to be recruited staff.

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)*

Sub-areas

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology
2.2 Practical training
2.3 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 program? 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

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 program employs a student-centred approach, with small class sizes facilitating personalized mentorship and interaction with faculty. Learning methods include lectures, workshops, laboratory work, and research projects, integrating bioinformatics and genomic technologies. Assessment is transparent and varied, combining examinations, tutorials, research presentations, and practical evaluations.

Strengths

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

The program integrates theoretical knowledge with hands-on research, encouraging active participation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The small class size is a big plus of the program, as it allows for individualized support and enhanced interaction. Students have direct access to experienced researchers, facilitating mentorship and academic development. Elective modules / courses provide flexibility in learning, allowing students to specialize based on their career goals. The program is taught in English, making it accessible to international students.
The Research project (a key component of the program) can be conducted in advanced laboratories with state-of-the-art technologies in cytogenetics, molecular genetics, and biochemical genetics, at the same time experiencing real-world clinical data. In particular, the EEC was pleased to learn that previous EEC comments have been addressed by implementing new technology and machinery.

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.

By discussing with students, the EEC noted that they would like to receive their research project and be exposed to the laboratory environment from the very beginning of the program, with optional courses to be attended during the whole duration of the program. The EEC feels that addressing this topic would benefit from a discussion with the students.

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)*

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 program, 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 program.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the program of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality program 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 program'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.

The PhD program benefits from a highly qualified faculty, composed of experienced researchers and specialists in medical genetics, bioinformatics, neuroscience, and molecular biology. Many faculty members are engaged in cutting-edge research, ensuring the latest scientific advancements are integrated into teaching. Advanced digital tools are used for education purposes.

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

The teaching staff includes renowned professors, researchers, and clinicians with expertise in various disciplines, including genetics, neuroscience, bioinformatics, and molecular biology, providing interdisciplinary exposure to students. Many faculty members have strong research backgrounds with international publications.
The EEC was impressed by the number of publications in respected journals, with students as first or co-authors.

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 noted variability in attending the “teach the teacher” courses and in the employment of digital tools across the faculty. It would be useful to plan regular meetings among the teaching staff to discuss innovation in teaching methodologies and promote direct interaction with students (e.g. through more practical examples).
The EEC also noted a lack of involvement of industry and policymakers in the program. This problem could be addressed by organizing guest lectures from industry professionals and policymakers.
As a minor suggestion, the EEC proposes to introduce a “best teacher award” to be nominated by the students.

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)

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 program 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.

Admission to the doctoral program follows strict criteria, including prior academic qualifications, research potential, and English proficiency. Progression is structured around regular evaluations, milestone achievements, and thesis progress reports. The institution follows transparent recognition policies for prior learning and credit transfers, ensuring alignment with European Qualification Framework (EQF) standards. Graduation requirements include successful completion of coursework, research milestones, and a public defense of the dissertation.

Strengths

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

The PhD program follows a well-structured pathway (240 ECTS) with a first year dedicated to coursework and minimum three years of research. Faculty members are actively involved in guiding students through coursework and research projects. The EEC was pleased to see a preparatory course dedicated to students from non-genetics backgrounds, which helps them to transition smoothly into the PhD program and it was also greatly appreciated by the students. Also, the EEC appreciated very much the early and comprehensive help of the admin staff, including the quick response to any questions (e.g. regarding housing issues), especially for international students.

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 was very satisfied with the setup of the program and the admin procedures. As a minor suggestion, the EEC proposes to introduce awards such as “best thesis”, “best research project”, “best publication”. For instance, the EEC really liked the fact that laboratories were named after prestigious former members of the Institute.

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

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 program.*
- *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 program.*
- *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 program.*
- *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 program 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 program, 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.

The Institute provides state-of-the-art laboratory facilities, access to advanced genetic sequencing technologies, and bioinformatics software. The program offers digital learning materials, research databases, and specialized libraries. A new building is being placed next to the existing one, which will accommodate even better resources for education, research and clinical care.

Strengths

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

Students have access to state-of-the-art laboratories specializing in cytogenetics, molecular genetics, biochemical genetics, and bioinformatics. The curriculum includes hands-on training with cutting-edge technologies used in genomic sequencing, gene expression analysis, and computational genetics. The program integrates online learning tools, including bioinformatics software and research databases. Online access to scientific journals, e-books, and digital learning platforms is gained through a collaboration with local universities. The library is a study environment and teaching halls are spacious, new and well equipped.

The institute maintains an established network of graduates working elsewhere, offering students valuable networking opportunities.

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 noted the big need to expand the storage and computing capacity for working with large sequencing data, and it was pleased to note that the institute is addressing this challenge by investing in new servers.

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	Compliant

6. Additional for doctoral programs *(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 program, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree program are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the program*
  - *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 programs 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.

The PhD program emphasizes high-level research, publication requirements, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Doctoral students receive structured supervision, with regular thesis evaluations and progress monitoring. A publication requirement in peer-reviewed journals ensures that graduates contribute to academic discourse. The PhD Thesis Examination Committee includes external reviewers, maintaining rigorous academic standards.

Strengths

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

There are clear and structured admission requirements. The EEC appreciated the existence of a preparatory course available for students coming from non-related fields. A rigorous admissions committee reviewes the process. A publication requirement (first-author paper in a peer-reviewed journal) before thesis submission reinforces research quality. Each student is assigned one or two research advisors from experienced faculty. There is regular progress monitoring, including an annual report and thesis progress examination. The PhD thesis examination committee, including an external examiner, ensures objective evaluation.

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, also based on comments from students, suggests to shorten the core PhD duration to three years and to make the first-year courses not mandatory but optional, throughout the course of the PhD.

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

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 program of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The EEC strongly recommends:

- a much more compact and straightforward format for the 5-year evaluation report prepared by the Institute (e.g. based on the slide presentations). Additional material can be provided, but it should not be part of the core document.
- a team-based (instead of individual-based) presentation of research output
- a standardized one-page CV of the PI of each team, including the five best publications (past 5 years) with metrics (e.g. h-index, citation index), and a list of team members with very short profiles (one paragraph).

Additional general remarks are:

- The EEC noted that the report lacked a description of the **academic landscape** in Cyprus, including other universities and institutes, in particular focusing on life sciences and addressing financial accessibility. This would help highlight the special position of CING.
- The EEC noted a shortage of information on filed or approved patents, IP and copyright protection measures , technology transfer (e.g. spin-offs, research incubators) and valorization of results in general. This might be an area of potential benefit deserving increased attention.
- The EEC highly appreciate the exchange of students from the occupied territory, and hopes that this will possibly contribute to better political conditions for Cyprus.

The complete list of recommendations across the five areas is copied below.

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

The EEC noticed that a few relevant topics are well represented in the program but in a rather fragmented way, and across different courses. To address this, the program could benefit from a modest revision attempting at making it more structured. For example, separate modules could be offered for the following topics: 1) forensic genetics; 2) personalized medicine; 3) stem cell biology and related models; 4) epidemiology; 5) AI applications (this is already considered but could be further expanded and formally included in the program). The EEC believes that these changes can make the program more appealing for prospective students and to be recruited staff.

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment

By discussing with students, the EEC noted that they would like to receive their research project and be exposed to the laboratory environment from the very beginning of the program, with optional courses to be attended during the whole duration of the program. The EEC feels that addressing this topic would benefit from a discussion with the students.

3. Teaching staff

The EEC noted variability in attending the "teach the teacher" courses and in the employment of digital tools across the faculty. It would be useful to plan regular meetings among the teaching staff to discuss innovation in teaching methodologies and promote direct interaction with students (e.g. through more practical examples). The EEC also noted a lack of involvement of industry and policymakers in the program. This problem could be addressed by organizing guest lectures from industry professionals and policymakers.
As a minor suggestion, the EEC proposes to introduce a "best teacher award" to be nominated by the students.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

The EEC was very satisfied with the setup of the program and the admin procedures. As a minor suggestion, the EEC proposes to introduce awards such as “best thesis”, “best research project”, “best publication”. For instance, the EEC really liked the fact that laboratories were named after prestigious former members of the Institute

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

The EEC noted the big need to expand the storage and computing capacity for working with large sequencing data, and it was pleased to note that the institute is addressing this challenge by investing in new servers.

6. Additional for doctoral programs

The EEC, also based on comments from students, suggests to shorten the core PhD duration to three years and to make the first-year courses not mandatory but optional, throughout the course of the PhD.

Signatures of the EEC

Name	*Signature*
Prof. Enza Maria Valente	
Prof. Hannelore Ehrenreich	
Prof. André Uitterlinden	
Ms. Stefania Masouri	

Date: 28/02/2025