Doc. 300.1.1/3

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report

(Joint - conventional - face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  Neapolis University
- **Collaborative Institution(s):**
  University of the Peloponnese (Greece)
- **Town: Paphos (Cyprus) and multiple cities in the Peloponnese**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School/Faculty

- **Department/ Sector:** Department/Sector

- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
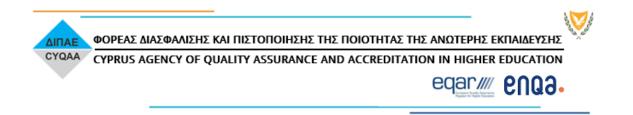
  In Greek:
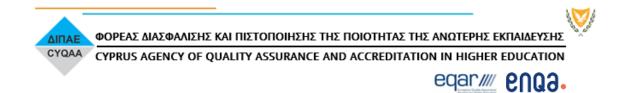
  Διδακτορικό Πρόγραμμα

  In English:

   PhD programme

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

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the "Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws" of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

Following the invitation by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYKA), the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) had the opportunity to evaluate the PhD Programme offered by the University of Neapolis (hereafter NUP) in Paphos (Cyprus) with Co-Supervision with the University of the Peloponnese (hereafter UoP) in Greece, at the following disciplines: (i) Business Administration, (ii) Banking, Accounting and Finance, (iii) Public Administration, (iv) Educational Management and Administration, (v) Economic Science, (vi) European Political Economy and Governance, (vii) History - International Relations, (viii) Computer Science, (ix) Psychology, (x) History – International Relations.

The EEC consisted of four academics: Professor and Chair Christina Lioma (University of Copenhagen), the members Professor Dimitris Papadimitriou (University of Manchester) and Associate Professor Dionisis Philippas (ESSCA School of Management), and a student representative Ms Maria Anastasou (University of Cyprus).

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the evaluation for the programme took place online on the 25th of November 2021. Prior to the visit, the EEC was supplied with a comprehensive internal evaluation report and other relevant documentation. On the day of the online visit, the EEC met with the senior management team and academic faculty responsible for delivering the PhD programme from both Universities, as well as the administrative and other support staff from NUP, and PhD candidates and graduates from this programme. In particular, during the online visit, the EEC met: NUP Rector Pantelis Sklias and UoP Rector Athanasios Katsis, Head of the Quality Assurance Department Georgia Christou, Member of Internal Evaluation Committee Savvas Chatzichristofis, Programme Coordinator Vasiliki Lalagianni, a number of professors (supervisors of PhDs) from both Universities, 13 PhD candidates and graduates (8 graduated, 5 ongoing), the Head Librarian Panage Christos, the Chief Information Officer Economides Titos, and the programme Administrator Georgiou Stalo.

In the morning sessions, the senior management team of NUP and UoP presented the universities and the ongoing PhD program under review. Next, the EEC met members of the faculty from both Universities. The discussion covered academic qualification, staff development, research, workload, assessment, and resources. Then, in the last sessions, the EEC met with PhD students and graduates who shared their experiences during the programme, and this was followed by a meeting with members of the administrative team.

After the presentations in each session, the EEC had the opportunity to ask questions and collect further information. More specifically, the EEC asked questions related to the programme (e.g., learning objectives, programme structure, delivery, assessments of learning, quality of learning, infrastructure and IT support, etc.), faculty, and the institution more broadly. Additional evidence was also provided (e.g., information on placements and how it works from distant students, example/s of how content of student reports of progress has been done, especially during the pandemic, information about support for students with financial difficulties, and career orientation that is offered) as requested.

The visit concluded with a meeting and general discussion with the senior management team (the two Rectors) for clarification questions from earlier sessions during the online visit. The EEC members found the discussions to be fruitful and informative.
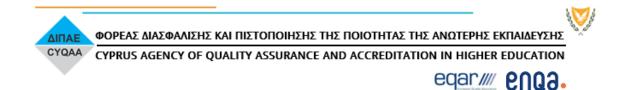
The EEC would like to thank all parties involved for their cooperation and support during the online evaluation. The committee would also like to express its gratitude to Mr. Lefkios Neophytou, the CYQAA coordinator, for his efficient way of managing the process.

As we detail below, we find that the program is overall either fully compliant or partially compliant to the stated criteria and standards. Given that it is a programme that has been ongoing the last years (since 2013) with a Greek governmental Official Gazette decision and formally certified from Cypriot state and, with the first students starting in 2016, we also offer suggestions to be considered by the Universities in hope of further improvement.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Christina Lioma	Professor	University of Copenhagen (Denmark)
Dimitris Papadimitriou	Professor	University of Manchester (U.K.)
Dionisis Philippas	Associate Professor	ESSCA School of Management (France)
Maria Anastasou	PhD student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

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

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

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

Findings

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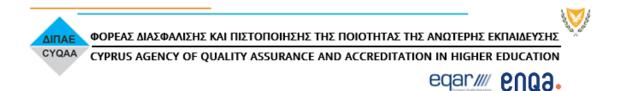
Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

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

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

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:*
    - *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*

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*
    - *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*

- o *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*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *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*
- o *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - o *key performance indicators*
  - o *profile of the student population*
  - o *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - o *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - o *learning resources and student support available*
  - o *career paths of graduates*

- *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?*

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 programme is a 3-year, full-time programme depending on prior graduate master level studies. Exceptionally the programme can stretch up to 5 years in duration. It requires a minimum of 180 ECTS points and it covers various

research topics ranging from Business Administration to History and International relations. More specifically, the programme offers the following research topics: (i) Business Administration, (ii) Banking, Accounting and Finance, (iii) Public Administration, (iv) Educational Management and Administration, (v) Economic Science, (vi) European Political Economy and Governance, (vii) History - International Relations, (viii) Computer Science, (ix) Psychology, (x) History – International Relations. Initially, in 2016, the programme started with 46 PhD candidates (out of approximate 70 applicants); however, after 2018 the programme did not register any new candidates. In particular, the programme started with 34 students in 2015-2016, 4 students in 2017, and 8 students in 2018. Currently, there are 27 active students at the programme since over the years there was 1 deletion and 5 suspensions, 2 students withdrew, 10 students graduated, and 1 student was transferred to another University. Moreover, in 2018 the status changed, and the PhD programme became departmental-oriented to be aligned with the current public laws in Greece and Cyprus.

As a general view, the PhD program offered is clearly structured, its objectives are in accordance with the overall strategies of both Greek and Cypriot Universities and the intended learning outcomes stem from and are consistent to the content of the program, with some room for improvement. The purpose, objectives, and learning outcomes have been adequately communicated and justified. The expected learning outcomes of the program were communicated clearly to the candidates. Overall, the program seeks to equip its doctoral graduates with analytical qualities that can prepare researchers and professionals for academic careers and professional promotion.

In broad strokes, the program resembles traditional doctoral programs in that graduate level training is initially offered, which is followed by opportunities for specialized research training (some with ECTS credit-bearing weight), before candidates begin working on their thesis. As well, there are regular checkpoints on progress such as the research proposal presentations and thesis' progress. The program also mandates the submission/publication of at minimum one scientific paper preferably in refereed international journals and at minimum two publications in conference proceedings. There are clear guidelines on the role of the supervisor, the Doctoral Program Committee, the Research Advisory Committee and the Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation Committee. All these steps are noted as positive aspects of the programme. Importantly, the specialization of the supervisors' overall maps onto the topics of the dissertations. When expertise is not available in-house the Universities draw upon external academics and this is also appreciated by the EEC. The admission criteria were common to comparable programs.

Quality assurance mechanisms are present and somewhat aligned with international standards. There are a number of quality assurance mechanisms and formal policies for the development and the management of the program of study.
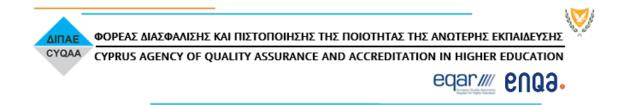
Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

In summary, the strengths of the program are as follows:
1. A very clear and well-described governance structure.
2. Quality assurance (internally and externally) in place. Many stakeholders are involved.
3. Management, faculty and administrative staff appear committed to the program.
4. A clear set of milestones and goals for the doctoral dissertation.

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.

Please refer to section 6 of the report where we elaborate on aspects of the program that can be improved. However, please find below some suggestions as food of thought:

The programme could have an international call and attract students from other countries than Greece and Cyprus. Currently no international student (outside Greece or Cyprus) is enrolled in the program. This goes against the goal of internationalisation that both partner universities subscribe to.

Most current students do not aspire to follow academic careers or careers in research, more broadly. No employability data has been provided, however evidence gathered during the interviews suggest relatively low levels of academic or research career uptake. While this is not an issue per se, the EEC notes that this is more common in DBA programs and likely not representative of the cohorts to follow; this is a point to be monitored. A core quality indicator for doctoral programs is the placement of their graduates in academic or research posts, as the training received during the doctoral program emphasises research. As such, a factor that the universities should consider adding as admission criterion in the future (especially if there are international calls), is the ambition to follow an academic career, or a career in research more broadly.

A key determinant is the research activity and status of the student's supervisor. As such, it is imperative for students to be supervised only by faculty that are indeed research active and, preferably, of high status. Given that the research activity of the Universities is somewhat uneven across faculty professors' levels (i.e. any level such as lectors can have PhD students in Cyprus), this is a point to be monitored in alignment with international standards.
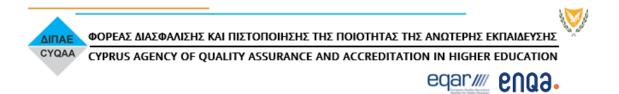
Doctoral supervision does not count explicitly towards faculty promotion. Given the responsibilities that such supervision carries, the EEC recommends that doctoral supervision should receive explicit, quantified, credit. It should also count for promotion.

The requirement to publish (or submit to conferences) papers has benefits but in the EEC's assessment and experience it often leads to significant shortcomings if effort is not made to target high quality venues. Namely, it often pushes students to publish in lower ranked journals instead of aiming for higher quality outlets. As such, the committee recommends for this requirement to be revisited, e.g., followed by a more focused academic venue list recognised internationally. Additional attention should be given to research outcomes; to give an example the publishing outcome of graduates is not balanced, some graduates have a much higher number of publications compared to others. There is a need to monitor the quality of publications along international standards.

It is not clear how the PhD candidate appraisal form and the QA forms from students are done. If, for example, a faculty member has one PhD candidate, some features of these forms that are supposed to ensure high quality are not followed, e.g. anonymity. It is more based on personal relationships, which is also desirable as well. It is not clear to the EEC if research training activities are appraised by students.
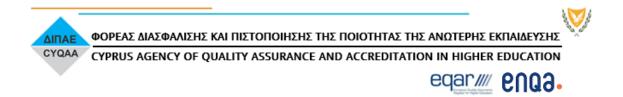
A PhD student is not obliged to offer assistant work to the supervisor and the university in general. This is something that could enhance the interaction of PhD students with University life. This is part of the student's research training, and is a standard component of a doctoral program according to high international standards.

It is not clear if this was part of the design of this program, or some artifact of the fact that this is a paying program with yearly fees, but all enrolled students interviewed by the EEC in this program had a full-time job during their studies. Automatically this places this program (which is formally a full-time program) in the position of some sort of part-time or on the side educational activity. It is not clear if the weekly workload of students, in terms of hours spent in each of the activities involved in the program, has been adjusted to this situation, or whether students have been left to find their own way of coping with this. In terms of educational standards, any program should have a breakdown of expected workload, translated to hours spent per week per activity, and this should be pre-defined and made public to the students prior to their enrollment.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

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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	Partially compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

> ### 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.*
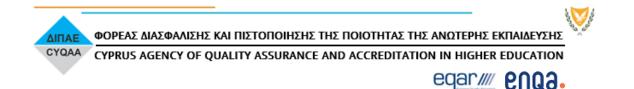
2.2 Practical training

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.*

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.*

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

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 EEC met some students and alumni. They were particularly satisfied and pleased with their studies. Both students and academic staff noted that the close relationship is built between them, affecting their studies positively not only during their studies but also their development after completion of their studies. The students have commented that

the instructors are accessible and helpful. A shared positive view was the assistance and good communication students have had with the teaching staff especially during covid restrictions. The students have expressed their gratitude towards the availability of the academic staff as everyone was open to communication. When there was space for improvement the professors were always there to assist and provide extra support.

Furthermore, regarding the enhancement of students' research socialisation, students have to participate in internal seminars where they present their research interests, discuss, comment and offer constructive critique of the research course of doctoral students. Overall the process of teaching and learning supports individual and research socialisation of the students. However, it is not clear what percentage of PhD students reside near the campus, but the campus offers adequate opportunities for research socialisation. It is not clear to the EEC to what extent students are exposed to the international research community of their respective area.

From the evidence gathered by the EEC, the process of teaching and learning (e.g., webinars, face to face meetings, pre-recorded webinars) seems to be quite flexible in respect of students' individual characteristics and needs (e.g., students from Greece or full-time employed students). There is good evidence that appropriate guidance and support from the teachers are in place.

Appropriate procedures for receiving student feedback and for dealing with students' complaints are in place.

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

The EEC notes the positive impact of the external examiners and observers to the proper delivery of the programme. The EEC feels that the program is fully managed by the academics in charge and there are no inappropriate non-academic interventions. The programme supports a friendly environment between students and teaching/ administrative staff.

The PhD students (and graduates) interviewed by the Committee highlighted they are quite satisfied with the quality of the program. They have also indicated that communication with faculty members during and after the studies, and the administrative team is open and part of the culture of the staff.

The programme is compatible with the professional employment of the students prior to, during and upon completion of their studies. In this sense, their studies are integrated smoothly into their professional careers, enhancing their prospects and adding value to all stakeholders and the broader job market.

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 academic output of the PhD students was found to be very diverse in terms of both quality and quantity. Explicit efforts should be made to monitor this and to ensure that the minimum academic output is consistent across the
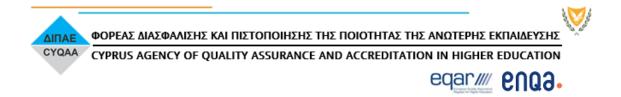
programme, in line with international standards, and exceeds a single international peer-reviewer publication at minimum.

Another advice on the level of practical training would be to use the manifold contacts with SMEs or relevant stakeholders in Cyprus to connect to societal issues relevant to such actors, which may lead to new sources of funding research where PhD students can work on high level with the companies or organisations in the specialties of the students and supervisors.

The EEC assesses that the programme can be tightened up and become more competitive in the future following the recommendations outlined above.

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	Partially 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.*

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- *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.

The EEC noted that the PhD program is supported by a well-qualified faculty, i.e., all of the faculty members are PhD qualified and experienced academics in both Universities.
Overall, there is a good fit between the teaching team's qualifications and expertise with the course units they deliver.

From the evidence gathered, the faculty appears to be involved with research activities, albeit in different levels across the two institutions. The EEC identified that there is a synergy between teaching and research. The EEC also observed that members of staff have experience in their field for several years.
During the visit, the teaching staff was praised both by students and by the alumni for both the quality of teaching and the level of support received.

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

The faculty members involved in this programme appear to be committed to the programme. The specialization fields of the faculty members are overall reflected in the content of the programme and in the supervisory roles. The faculty's research informs their teaching.

There is a good balance between UoP and NUP faculty members. There are two main supervisors for each PhD student (one from each institution). The experienced faculty have been in academia for several years.

Teaching outcomes are monitored and are carefully reviewed by the institution so that any issues arising are dealt with in timely and in a professional manner.

The program makes an effort to draw upon qualified academics from other institutions in PhD committees.

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.

Overall, there is a good fit between the supervisory team's qualifications and expertise with the course units they deliver, with the exception of one case, where appropriate action was taken and the PhD student was transferred to another international university with local expertise. This nevertheless begs the question of why this student was allowed to begin a programme where the topic of investigation was not among the expertise of the local faculty.

Both partner universities provide some central procedures to support staff career development. However there is no compulsory training activity menu that leads to accreditation of supervisory skills and that is compulsory for all staff. On the positive side, the EEC found that the university is supporting its staff to undertake research and disseminate their research findings through the appropriate channels.

Supervisory outcomes are monitored although the substance of these assessments is not entirely clear in terms of the action taken. Specifically, the outcomes of these questionnaires are anonymously aggregated and returned back to the whole student body, as an overall assessment of the whole programme. It is not however clear how the points raised in this consultation are actioned. This is a digression from high international standards.

The program makes an effort to draw upon qualified academics from other institutions in PhD defence committees. However, the ratio of international & external versus local members in these PhD committees is: 35% UoP, 36% NUP, 30% external. The participation of external members to the committee is too low according to international high standards, where the ratio of external members must form the clear majority. It is also a deviation from international high standards to allow the supervisor of the PhD student to have an equal role in the defence committee as the remaining members: according to international high standards, the supervisor may have a sitting role, or secondary role in the committee, but may not have an equal say in the assessment, to avoid issues of favouritism, bias, and to ensure the necessary level of independence and integrity in the evaluation.

The EEC further suggests some recommendations for the faculty participating in this PhD programme.
1. More recognition, in terms of career development, should be given to those who agree to supervise students in the PhD programme.
2. More attention should be given to the balance of seniority and expertise in the members of the supervisory team. According to high international standards, only tenured faculty can act as primary supervisor.
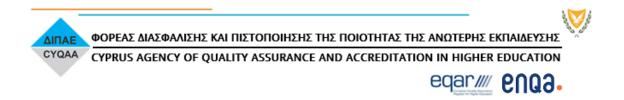3. It is important that a sufficiently robust research training unit is embedded into the PhD programme. The current research training seminars should be additional to this unit, but not substitute it.

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

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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.*

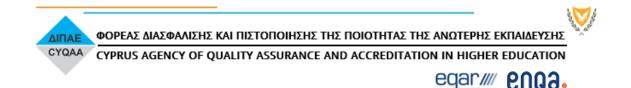**4.3 Student recognition**

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 EEC met 13 doctoral students and graduates, 8 of them were graduates and 5 of them are close to PhD viva. We asked them about their experiences, and what they liked and disliked as well as what they think could be improved at the programme. In general, we noted that students were very positive about the programme, both Universities and the support received.

The faculty members and supervisors as well as the administrative personnel were very helpful during their studies, they listened to the needs of students as well as the needs of the market and integrated this in the program. Processes to monitor student progression and support are in place.

We noted that most students were/are working full time during the PhD thesis, and they did not aspire to become academics or pursue a career in research but rather meant to use the PhD to further boost their careers. This is not a concern per se as even in leading doctoral programs not all graduates end up in academia or pursue research. But this tendency of graduates toward industry careers is more consistent with Doctor in Business Administration (DBA) programs.
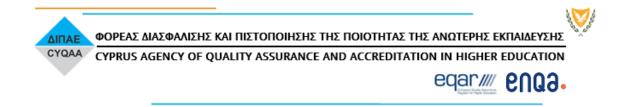
Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

1.   The program is focused on students' needs.

2.   The students are well taken care of by the Universities in terms of material, academic support, IT support, library issues, etc.

3.   Scholarships or financial support are, in principle, available.

4.   There is a strong interactive research and personal relationship between the supervisors and the PhD students, as the students emphasised.

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.

1.   The scholarships can be expanded by taking into consideration not only economical criteria but also based on other criteria regarding research innovation. This would help both universities to attract international students and will also ensure a high quality level of their students' products (e.g. scientific papers). The criteria for the award of scholarships and/or financial support ought to be clearer and publicly available. Applications for financial support should be available both prior and after entry to the programme.

2.   There is some concern that anonymity is compromised during the evaluation process. The programme should take action to introduce greater distance between students and the supervisory staff being evaluated.

3.   The Universities can grow an alumni network for their graduates in order to continue this link with their universities after PhD viva.
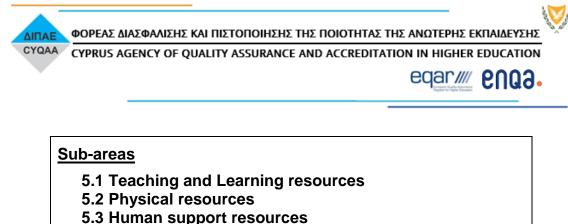
4.   There was little evidence that students were aware of international research standards applicable to the programme. There is a danger that student expectations in this regard are kept artificially low (in terms of what constitutes high quality international publications, or blind peer-review processes, or participation in top-tier conferences, for instance).

5.   After the first and second year, there should be an exit strategy for students not wishing or not able to pursue the remainder of the programme. This exit strategy could have the form of some sort of M.Phil. equivalent certification, for instance.

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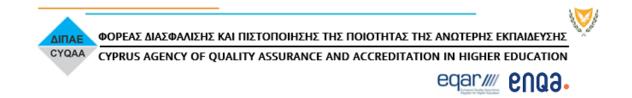- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

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

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- *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.*

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.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the EEC did not have the opportunity to visit the premises of Neapolis University in Paphos. The view of the EEC related to facilities, physical and human support resources is primarily based on the internal report and the discussions with the staff. Overall, the EEC believes that Neapolis University offers satisfactory resources and a wide range of services to both students and teaching staff (e.g., access to library material, IT infrastructure and administrative support), that feature a wide range of sources (e.g., books, e-books, interface open-source platform, and so on). In terms of human capital support, the University and the Departments are performing well on that front as well; there is an adequate number of experienced and well-educated staff that supports the smooth operations of the University and the PhD programme. Also, the two Universities seem to have a great collaboration over time impacting positively on the further development of Neapolis University and

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

There are some strengths to be noted:
1. The management and administration team are committed in providing the necessary support to teaching staff and students with the necessary resources needed to perform their duties.
2. The personnel are well trained, with the EEC noticed the skilled administration staff that supports academic staff and students.
3. A moderation model based on the EU quality framework is applied for quality control and support to teachers and staff. Moreover, the EEC believes that students' participation in the internal quality assurance committee is a good practice.
4. The EEC noted that the University is able to provide teaching, research and communication activities online when circumstances related to the pandemic dictated so. This can also lead to ways of attracting an international body of potential students in the future.
5. The library meets expectations in an academic environment and serves the current needs of students and faculty. Notably, the library offers on a regular basis each semester seminars for students on "Information literacy (introducing guides to search methods and research tools for maximum exploitation of library resources, as well as bibliographic references)" (See Application file, p. 44).
6. New eco-friendly facilities are on the way.

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.

7 out of the total of 46 students enrolled in this programme have asked for suspension of their studies for one year (5) or have withdrawn (2). The reason provided by NUP and UoP for this is: health issues or extra work load. This ratio of 7 out of 46 ought to be investigated and the reasons behind the students' impression of extra work load should be analysed, so that the work load can be adjusted and revised. It is a failure of the programme to allow students to commence studies on this programme (and invest in terms of their time, monetary funds, personal commitment, and so on) and then fail to complete it, at such high percentage.

The EEC noted that over the 10-years life of the University of Neapolis, there has been substantial progress in facilities, physical and human capital resources. Any additional development on the requirements for the technology used for e-learning, databases, and premises, would contribute not only to this under-review programme but also to a range of physical/distance learning programs and on attracting more international students in the future.

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	Partially 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*

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- o *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?*
- *Can you please provide us with some 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.

This is a PhD programme targeting individuals who wish to develop their spectrum of knowledge on particular scientific areas and evolve their professional career. With an ECTS credit weighting of 180, the structure of the PhD programme is compatible to international standards and the criteria for awarding the degree are clear. However, the research training component of the programme and the method of what constitutes sufficient progress for the award of the degree are not sufficiently robust.
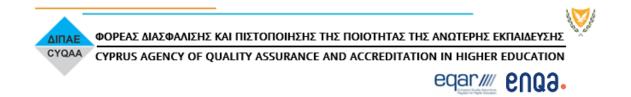
The collaboration between the two Universities in this PhD programme seems to have a positive manner on both sides. The University of Peloponnese helped Neapolis University to develop a PhD programme, promote staff and students' mobility, expand its resources and gain reputation only locally but also outside Cyprus.

The virtual onsite visit confirmed commitment on the part of staff and students to the Programme although most of the students are/were employed during their studies outside the University and their total workload is quite demanding. Nevertheless, students emphasised the supportive environment created by their supervisor and the rest of the academic staff involved in their research thesis.

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

The EEC notes the positive feedback received from the students interviewed and the positive relationship between administrative/supervisory staff and the students. There is evidence of some good practice in the relation to the organisation of the programme and engagement of students with it.

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 programme ought to attract a more diverse student intake, in terms of their research aspirations and also more international students (outside Greece or Cyprus).

Consideration might be given to the development of substitute pathways. In particular the development of a Professional Doctorate focusing specifically on educational professionals seeking to enhance their knowledge, skills and competences but who are not interested in research or academic careers.

Senior management should find ways to make the criteria for research evaluation more transparent and quantifiable. The career destinations of PhD students should be monitored and made public (anonymised statistics, for example) so that prospective applicants to the programme can get a clearer set of expectations as to whether the programme has a stronger vocational dimension than a purely academic one.

It is recommended that better use is made of contacts with SMEs or relevant societal stakeholders in Cyprus and Greece.

The programme should be built on stronger research externalities both in terms of staff publication and research funding record, and in terms of student exposure to peer interaction, nationally and internationally.

The EEC notes that current requirements with regards to the doctoral defence committee are divergent from international standards in that external members are in a minority, compared to internally appointed examiners. This should be rectified.

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	Partially compliant
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
6.3	Supervision and committees	Partially compliant

7. Eligibility *(ALL ESG)*

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **7.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement**
> **7.2 The joint programme**
> **7.3 Added value of the joint programme**

7.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement

Standards

- *The joint programme is offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems.*
- *The terms and conditions of the joint programme are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:*
  - *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
  - *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, including funding, sharing of costs and income, resources for mobility of staff and students*
  - *Admission and selection procedures for students*
  - *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
  - *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*
  - *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*

7.2 The joint programme

Standards

- *The partner universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes.*
- *The joint programme is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design, delivery and further development of the programme.*
- *Aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated, including a joint syllabus, language policy, as well as an account of the intended added value of the programme.*
- *Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.*

7.3 Added value of the joint programme

Standards

The joint programme leads to the following added values:

- *Increases internationalisation at the institutions.*
- *Stimulates multinational collaboration on teaching at a high level and makes cooperation binding.*
- *Increases transparency between educational systems.*

- *Develops study and research alternatives in accordance with emerging needs.*
- *Improves educational and research collaboration.*
- *Offers students an expanded and innovative arena for learning.*
- *Increases highly educated candidates' employability and motivation for mobility in a global labour market.*
- *Increases European and non-European students' interest in the educational programme.*
- *Increases competence at partner institutions through cooperation and implementation of a best practice system.*
- *Increases the institution's ability to change in step with emerging needs.*
- *Contributes to tearing down cultural barriers, both personal and institutional.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Does the joint study programme conform to the requirements of a study programme offered at the specific level?*
- *Is there a system that assures the quality of joint provision and guarantees that the aims of the programme are met?*
- *Do the mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the joint study programme take into consideration the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)? Are they adopted by all the universities involved?*
- *Is the division of responsibilities in ensuring quality clearly defined among the partner universities?*
- *Is relevant information about the programme, e.g. admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures, well documented and published by taking into account the specific needs of students?*
- *What is the added value of the programme of study?*
- *Is there a sustainable funding strategy among the partner universities? Explain.*
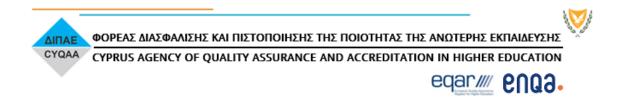
Findings

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.

This joint programme is compliant with the legal frameworks of Cyprus and Greece in terms of national higher education systems. Both universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes, with the University of Neapolis taking the lead in most cases.

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

Both universities appear to be involved in the design and delivery of the programme. The EEC got the impression that this programme will not be further developed by the partner universities.

The EEC assesses that appropriate study counselling is provided and that the mobility plans that are in place are efficient and take into account personal needs of the students and their topic of specialisation.

This programme increases internationalisation at the institution level and stimulates multinational collaboration at a high level. The programme also increases transparency between educational systems on the level of educational and research collaboration.

The response of the partner universities to the COVID-19 pandemic during this programme is a credit to the institutions' ability to change in step with emerging needs.

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.

It is not clear to what extent the international exposure of students beyond the two participating institutes meets minimum standards that are comparable to international standards. It is not clear to what degree students are offered a truly international (beyond Cyprus and Greece), expanded and innovative arena for learning.

The majority of current students or alumni have remained employed in the same type of job and employment rank as before or during their studies. In this sense, it is not clear to what extent this programme increases the candidates' employability and motivation for mobility in a global labour market. Out of all the students and alumni interviewed, only one seems to have proceeded on to the global labour market: the student who had to quit the programme and get a transfer to another university in the UK.

There is no evidence that this programme has made an effort or has managed to increase non-European students' interest in the educational programme.

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

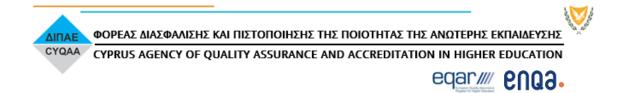| Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
7.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	Compliant
7.2	The joint programme	Compliant
7.3	Added value of the joint programme	Partially compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

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

The PhD program jointly provided from Neapolis University and the University of Peloponnese (Paphos) is an ongoing doctoral program. The EEC appreciates that significant progress and outcome have been made since the launch of the program including drawing upon external expertise, quality assessments and program structure consistent with comparable programs.

As with any new program, there is also space for improvement. Indeed, we have identified a number of areas where we see that further development is recommended. We have elaborated on those in each section above. These include refinements in future admission criteria, more transparency and measurable criteria for research evaluation and research externalities i.e. internationalisation, diversification, alumni, etc., process towards completion, research trainings, explicit recognition of faculty effort for doctoral supervision, and strengthening of assessment processes, to ensure program graduates increase their chances of academic and research placements. We strongly recommend seeing our suggestions provided, as we believe they may improve the PhD program significantly.

The EEC would like to thank all involved at both Neapolis University and the University of Peloponnese for the high engagement throughout the evaluation process - and for providing a rich set of supporting documents and interactive video, before, during and after the remote visit. In addition, we appreciate the constructive, lively and reflective spirit during the virtual visit as well as the commitment to continuous improvement, expressed by the various representatives of the university. We also thank Mr. Lefkios Neophytou for the smooth organization of the evaluation process.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Christina Lioma	
Dimitris Papadimitriou	
Dionisis Philippas	
Maria Anastasou	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: Click to enter date