

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: Date.

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

- Higher Education Institution:  
University of Cyprus
- Town: Lefkosia
- School/Faculty (if applicable): Faculty of Social  
Sciences and Education
- Department/ Sector: Department of Education
- Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

In Greek:

Μάστερ στη Μάθηση στις Φυσικές Επιστήμες και το  
Περιβάλλον (1,5 χρόνια, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ, MA))

In English:

Masters in Learning in Natural Sciences and the  
Environment (1,5 years, 90 ECTS, Master, MA)

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



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].

In Greek: Concentrations  
In English: Concentrations

## A. Introduction

*This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.*

Before meeting in Cyprus, members of the Committee individually read through the documentation that we had been sent. On the day of the visit to the Institution, the Committee first met with a representative of the Agency to discuss the scope of the review and its procedures and then conducted a whole-day, on-site visit at the main campus of the University of Cyprus. Here, meetings were held with the Vice Rector and other senior staff and then a series of separate meetings were held with academic staff on the Program, administrative staff on the Program, external stakeholders and three Masters students, 2 PhD students and 2 PhD graduates. We also visited the central library of the University and reviewed remotely the laboratory facilities used by the Program.

We received exhaustive documentation in the application submitted by the Institution, which must have taken a very considerable amount of time to compile. This was more extensive than needed, particularly in light of the extensive CVs, where short biographies would have been adequate. It nevertheless proved extremely valuable in providing very detailed information prior to our visit and in assisting us in writing this evaluation report.

We are particularly grateful to all members of staff and the students in very helpfully giving their time to assist us in undertaking this evaluation. The Panel felt that there was an element of transparency and readiness to provide additional information, when requested, to assist in the evaluation process.

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

| <i>Name</i>                 | <i>Position</i>                             | <i>University</i>         |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Professor Peter Higgins     | Chair, Professor of Environmental Education | University of Edinburgh   |
| Professor Paul J Pace       | Member, Professor of Education for Sust Dev | University of Malta       |
| Professor Yannis Ieropoulos | Member, Professor of Env Engineering        | University of Southampton |
| Mr Alexandros Evgeniou      | Member, Student, Business Administration    | Open University 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:*
  - *is a part of the strategic management of the program.*
  - *focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study program.*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*
    - *is developed with input from industry leaders and other stakeholders (i.e. industry leaders, professional bodies/associations, social partners, NGO's, governmental agencies) to align with professional standards.*
    - *integrates employer surveys to adapt to evolving workplace demands.*
    - *regularly utilizes alumni feedback for long-term effectiveness assessment.*
    - *is published and implemented by all stakeholders.*

### 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

#### Standards

- *The programme of study:*
  - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*

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

### 1.3 Public information

#### Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*

- *qualification awarded*
- *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
- *pass rates*
- *learning opportunities available to the students*
- *graduate employment information*

*In addition, the program has established mechanisms of transparency & communication to ensure that*

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

#### 1.4 Information management

##### Standards

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

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*

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

## Findings

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

The content of the two pathways in the Masters programme seems appropriate for the title degree pathways, and is commensurate with comparable other programmes internationally. The purpose and objectives are well defined and differentiate appropriately between the two pathways.

## Strengths

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

- The programme's purpose and objectives, as outlined in the documentation, appeared to be well designed and appropriate to achieve the specified outcomes for graduates.
- The range of inputs from industry and stakeholders provided additional context that made it more relevant to the students.
- Access to lab facilities provides students with useful hands-on experience.
- Academic staff seemed engaged in the process of continuous improvement and open to suggestions.
- Several members of staff made time to provide extended learning opportunities in local contexts, including at weekends and during the summer break; these were highly valued by the 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.*

- There are several major omissions from the Programme documentation and the Panel assumes, content:
  - There was no information in any of the material submitted on issues pertaining to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
  - UN Sustainable Development Goals were missing from the programme documentation. Current and new programmes and courses should clearly and explicitly align with identified specific SDGs.
  - The Panel was not convinced that students were exposed to contemporary international discussions on the content and definitional issues in ESD
- Large number of postgraduate programmes (ca. 60) is at odds with the low numbers of students. This may appear to be an advantage for the students, but can lead to fragmentation, overlap, lack of integration of conceptual material across the programme and heavy resource demands (teaching); a resource rebalancing is therefore recommended.
- The choices of compulsory and optional courses may be rigorously reviewed; for example:
  - EDU 660 is a core elective, which refers specifically to "science education" but this seems less relevant to the ESE pathway.
  - EDU 641 could easily be a replacement because *gender* is a highly significant cross-cutting issue
  - EDU 655 which is entitled *Fundamentals* of Environmental and Sustainability Education, and EDU 651 Nature of Science and Science Teaching, should surely be compulsory, within the relevant pathways

- If the intention is to further internationalise, some consideration should be given to developing/ensuring English language competencies, which would facilitate student access to the international literature most of which is in English.
- The Faculty does not provide information or analysis of potential career paths for its graduates, which could help guide them in making informed choices.

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

| Sub-area |                                                  | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 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 is explicitly stated in course outlines, ensuring students are aware of the expected workload.
  - A balanced assessment weighting strategy is implemented, considering the complexity and learning objectives of each task, to ensure fair evaluation of student performance.

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*

- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- *Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?*
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- *Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

### Findings

*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.*

Skills attained during the studies, have been found as useful during employment, specifically research skills for those that undertook Bachelors studies in Primary Education. Content enabled students to better navigate and employ new trends in education. The students were positive about the 'assessment feedback loop' on certain courses, where for example they were provided with feedback, in class and written, which they were then expected to address in the subsequent submission of their work. With the exception of students from abroad, all the MSc and PhD students the Panel met are UCy UG graduates.

### Strengths

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

- The program emphasizes active learning strategies, encouraging students to engage deeply with the material through discussions, projects, and hands-on activities.
- Faculty members provide personalized support and mentorship, helping students tailor their learning experiences to their individual interests and career goals.
- The program employs innovative teaching methodologies, including problem-based learning and collaborative projects, to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It offers extensive fieldwork opportunities, allowing students to gain practical experience in natural settings and apply their knowledge in real-world contexts.
- Classes are designed to be interactive, with a focus on student participation and real-world applications of theoretical concepts. Students have access to well-equipped laboratories where they can conduct experiments and research under the guidance of experienced faculty.

- The program uses a variety of assessment methods, including exams, projects, presentations, and practical evaluations, to comprehensively evaluate student learning. Students receive continuous feedback on their performance, helping them identify areas for improvement and achieve their academic goals.

### 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.*

- Strengthening partnerships with industry and research institutions could provide more internship and practical training opportunities for students.
- Whilst students receive ongoing feedback re their assignments, no feedback is given in the case of examinations, except when specifically requested by the individual students. Such feedback could consist of a general evaluation and comments by the examiner of how the students fared in the exam and how they might improve their work.
- Whilst the Masters students (3) the Panel met were engaged by the idea of doing a research dissertation, clearly this is unlikely to be the case for all. The Panel would like to suggest staff consider the option of an Applied Project, which allows students to develop an educational resource to support theory-driven professional practice. For example the excellent initiative of the summer school in the city park would be an ideal opportunity for students to develop such resources, use and evaluate them, and get academic credit for doing so.
- The differentiation between the compulsory qualitative and quantitative research methods options is understandable and pragmatic. However, it does limit student experience of these approaches and the Panel would encourage an internal review of the value combining these courses.
- At present, all lectures are delivered in person, with no possibility of running in hybrid mode or recording of the lecture for subsequent offline access. Whilst this is understandable, given the value of modelling pedagogical practice, it disadvantages some students (especially EDI related); lack of an opportunity to review (lecture material) limits students' reflection and learning.
- Although the majority of the course descriptors specify content and learning outcomes well, in certain cases, course descriptors were widely inconsistent. For example:
  - the number of learning outcomes specified ranges from 3 to 20
  - one descriptor substituted learning outcomes with course description
  - bibliographies ranged from a reasonable number of texts to up to 6 pages in length.
- To aid in clarity and students' choice, the Panel recommends identifying no more than 5 assessable learning outcomes, no more than 5 core and up to 5 supplementary readings.

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

| Sub-area | Non-compliant/<br>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 programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

#### 3.2 Teaching staff number and status

##### Standards

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

#### 3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

##### Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

### Findings

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

As a result of the rigorous recruitment processes, the teaching personnel were recognized by the Panel as highly qualified with outstanding academic credentials. They are clearly highly committed to teaching and pedagogy. Department-level collaboration of the teaching staff seem to be active and productive. The overall appearance is that teaching staff are acting and collaborating very effectively at the departmental, national and international level, not only in research but in developing teaching and learning in general. The Panel were particularly impressed by the evidence of close collaboration in national educational developments, as reported by the 3 external members of the MoE. The University of Cyprus offers a good range of career long professional learning (CLPL) opportunities. There appears to be a healthy student-to-staff ratio, which should provide excellent opportunities for personalized learning and engagement. In relation to the Panel's international experience, there is a disproportionate number of senior Professorial staff, to junior Lecturers and Special Teaching Staff. This "inverted pyramid" model may be a consequence of Covid and the compulsory requirement for teaching staff to apply for promotion.

### Strengths

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

- With the exception of the final comment, the Panel considers all of the above as strengths of the Teaching Staff.
- Staff commitment is evident in a number of ways such as providing opportunities for students through broader informal and non-formal curricula, which extend beyond normal contact hours.

### 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.*

- Staff CLPL is recommended for critically important understanding and implementation of principles of EDI.
- Nomenclature such as “Special Teaching Staff” should be aligned with current international terminology such as “Teaching Fellows”. This is particularly to avoid confusion with special education needs (SEN) support.
- Whilst some staff seem familiar with the possibilities and hazards of student use of generative artificial intelligence (gen-AI), these issues are complex and changing rapidly and the Panel would advise further staff development in this area as a priority.

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

| Sub-area |                                            | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|----------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1      | Teaching staff recruitment and development | Partially compliant                                     |
| 3.2      | Teaching staff number and status           | Partially compliant                                     |
| 3.3      | Synergies of teaching and research         | Compliant                                               |

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

##### Sub-areas

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

##### 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

###### Standards

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

##### 4.2 Student progression

###### Standards

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

##### 4.3 Student recognition

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

#### 4.4 Student certification

##### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

##### Findings

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

Student research projects are recognised and valued at national and international levels. The website provides clarity on the pre-entry requirements, recognition of appropriate qualifications, course outlines and regulations. These are in line with the Panel's experience internationally.

##### Strengths

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

- The processes for admission and criteria for acceptance on the degree programme, are clearly specified and publicly available via the Department website, with the exception of the first improvement point made below.
- Programme provides a supportive environment for student progression, including academic advising and mentoring.
- The Administrative Staff (e.g. IT-support, planning support, student progress monitoring) are clearly very competent and highly experienced; the Panel saw this part of the Department as the "backbone" of the Programme.
- Regular monitoring of grades and student progress is conducted by the Administrative staff, who are easily accessible to the 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.*

- Specific foreign language certification and minimum entry level requirements are missing from the website.
- Whilst support Staff are a great strength of the Department the institutional memory (and wisdom) of all such procedures and practices resides with three members of staff, one of whom is soon to retire. The Panel strongly suggests that pre-emptive appointment processes are put in place to ensure that the work-load of each of the remaining two staff does not increase (albeit relatively briefly) by half.

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

| Sub-area |                                           | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|----------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 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 programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

### 5.2 Physical resources

#### Standards

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

### 5.3 Human support resources

#### Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

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

## 5.4 Student support

### Standards

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

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

### Findings

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

The Panel was provided with an informative and engaging overview of the University's teaching and learning resources, through a visit to the library and additional video links.

### Strengths

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

- The University of Cyprus owns one of the country's largest and most comprehensive libraries, housed in a unique building that is accessible and highly conducive to student study.
- The Faculty has well equipped laboratories, lecture halls and study spaces.
- The Programme is supported by a competent team of Administrative staff and a dedicated team of Faculty members who are experts in the fields.
- The University offers a range of support services, including IT, academic advising, mental health counselling, career services.

### 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 Department as a whole, including Programme Administrative Staff and other support services, should be co-located on the main campus.
- IT services should be available for the duration of the University opening hours, if any technical issues occur.
- Implementing more sustainability initiatives, within the physical resources, could align the facilities with the programme's focus on the environment, adopt a whole Institution approach and help develop and make evident the commitment to a sustainable learning environment.
- Establishing peer mentoring programmes could provide additional support, learning opportunities and foster a sense of community amongst students.
- Not all graduates will become academics and not all will chose to work in schools. As there are presumably a wide range of career options including environmental centres, museums, government departments, non-governmental organisations and charities. It may be helpful in recruitment and progression to highlight this, and ensure that as wide a range of learning opportunities to promote these career pathways is made evident.

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

| Sub-area |                                 | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|----------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 5.1      | Teaching and Learning resources | Compliant                                               |
| 5.2      | Physical resources              | Compliant                                               |
| 5.3      | Human support resources         | Compliant                                               |
| 5.4      | Student support                 | Compliant                                               |

P.S. The Panel could not differentiate between points 5.3 and 5.4 above.

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

### Sub-areas

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

### 6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

#### Standards

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

### 6.2 Proposal and dissertation

#### Standards

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

### 6.3 Supervision and committees

#### Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*

- reports per semester and feedback from supervisors
- support for writing research papers
- participation in conferences
- The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.

You may also consider the following questions:

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

### Findings

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

### Strengths

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

### 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.

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

| Sub-area |                                     | Non-compliant/<br>Partially Compliant/Compliant |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 6.1      | Selection criteria and requirements | Choose answer                                   |
| 6.2      | Proposal and dissertation           | Choose answer                                   |
| 6.3      | Supervision and committees          | Choose answer                                   |

#### D. Conclusions and final remarks

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

The Panel wishes to express its appreciation to the Faculty, the Department and CYQAA for the opportunity to evaluate the subject Programmes of study, for accreditation.

To implement the above recommendations concerning strengthening the Master's and Doctoral Programs, the Panel members would encourage a culture in which study leave is not solely focused on research, but also used by staff to learn from excellent practice in other universities, concerning program structure, assessment and pedagogy. This should be entirely possible given the present provision for regular study leave. In developing any new specialist area within this active and emerging area of academia, it is particularly important to make links with other universities that have an appropriate track record.

Despite the evident and considerable success of the Department, there may be benefit in drawing up a five-year strategic plan to consider the above recommendations, and specifically:

- An overview of the current wide range of courses to ensure an integrated approach to course provision
- Review of priority compulsory courses and assessments to ensure students have an overview of their field
- In light of this, are there courses which are not a priority, and/or could be combined to provide a more holistic program?

Such a plan could discuss how the Department wants to be seen internationally, particularly in program provision which naturally would be linked with research and knowledge exchange.

#### E. Signatures of the EEC

| Name                        | Signature                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Professor Peter Higgins     |  |
| Professor Paul J Pace       |  |
| Professor Yannis Ieropoulos |  |
| Mr Alexandros Evgeniou      |  |
| Click to enter Name         |                                                                                       |
| Click to enter Name         |                                                                                       |

Date: 18 October 2024



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



eqar /// enqa.