Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 24.01.2024

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

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

  Διδακτορικό Κοινωνιολογίας

  In English:

  PhD in Sociology

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** Existing

- **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.

The visit took place on Monday 22nd January 2024 onsite in Nicosia. Prior to the meeting, the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) studied the Application for Evaluation, and the EEC report from the previous evaluation in 2019.

The EEC met with the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and Chairperson of the Internal QA Committee of the University, the Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Education, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Department of Social and Political Sciences, the Coordinator of the Sociology PhD Programme, Members of the Sociology Programme's Coordination Committee, Administrative Staff of the Department of Social and Political Sciences, Teaching Staff in Sociology, as well as Current Students and Graduates of the PhD in Sociology.

Our overall impression of the visit was very good. The evaluation was conducted in a highly professional manner, including PowerPoint presentations and thorough discussions with all stakeholders involved.

It is particularly worth noting that:

(1)   This is the only Sociology PhD Programme in Cyprus. However, there is currently not a Department of Sociology within the University of Cyprus and the programme is located within the Department of Social and Political Science.
(2)   There are very few students on the Sociology PhD programme and there is a distinct lack of scholarships.
(3)   There is a strong sense of collegiality and shared sense of purpose within the Department.
(4)   Both staff and students are highly motivated and committed although they consider the PhD journey an isolating experience.
(5)   Some progress has been made since the last EEC Report in 2019, notably around the much-needed introduction of the new MA in Sociology as a stepping stone towards entry into the PhD programme.

The University of Cyprus was founded in 1989 as the first university in Cyprus and currently has about 7,000 students (5,000 UG and 2,000 PG). It is a research-oriented university with currently 28 ERC grants, consisting of 8 Faculties/Schools and 22 Departments across 3 campuses. Its library is the biggest in Cyprus. At present 4% of its UG students take part in mobility (Erasmus).

The following sections highlight the strengths and areas for improvement of the programme under the headings: (1) Study programme and study programme's design and development; (2) Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment; (3) Teaching staff; (4) Student admission, progression, recognition and certification; (5) Learning resources and student support; and (6) Additional for doctoral programmes.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Professor Daniel Faas	Chair	Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
Professor Heather Hamill	Member	University of Oxford, UK
Professor Sawitri Saharso	Member	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands
Anna Panayiotou	Member (Student)	Open University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sub-areas

1. **Policy for quality assurance**
2. **Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review**
3. **Public information**
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*

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*
    - *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*

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*

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 labour 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 in Sociology is a 3-8 year programme of independent research which aims to prepare candidates for conducting independent and original research in the discipline of Sociology. It is the only PhD programme in Sociology in Cyprus.

The University of Cyprus has Quality Assurance Policy and an internal Quality Assurance System which are applied to all programmes of study including the doctoral programme. The QA tools include course and supervisor evaluation by students, student satisfaction and exit surveys and key performance indicators such as number of applications, drop-out rate, and course success rate. These are all clearly understood by members of staff.

The UCY has established the quality assurance requirements of the PhD dissertation as follows:

- Extensive literature review and in-depth reference to research at the international level, addressing the topic of the litterateur and the correlation of results with the scientific field.
- A clear reference to the scientific contribution of the dissertation to the extension of knowledge of the specific field based on the research carried out.
- Significant and original contribution to scientific knowledge.
- The scientific contribution and originality of the dissertation should be clearly summarised in the dissertation summary and analysed more extensively in the main part of the dissertation. The dissertation must satisfy the following specifications according to the Doctoral Thesis Preparation Guide for the Preparation, Syntax, Writing and Submission of the Doctoral Dissertation:
  A. Proper Structure of the main parts of the dissertation
  B. Required specifications which include the booklet, submission, size, cover, font, spacing, margin and layout of the dissertation
  C. Correct typographical appearance and
  D. Successful plagiarism control.

The quality assurance standards on PhD in Sociology are compatible with equivalent programmes internationally.

Doctoral students are supervised by one supervisor and their project will fall within the direct research interests of supervisor. There are also only 3 PhD students in total and thus the overall experience of the students is very dependent on the relationship they maintain with their supervisor. Both students and supervisors reported this as being universally positive but this heavy reliance on a 1 to 1 relationship is a risk.

Student progression is dependent on passing an exam in three different areas: Classical Sociological Theory, Contemporary Sociological Theory and Research Methods). Within three years of admission students must defend their research proposal before a 3-member internal committee and then they defend their final thesis before a 5-member committee (to include one member external to the department and one member external to the University). Between the proposal

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

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

eqar//// enqa.

defence and thesis defence, students must give an annual presentation on their research to the department where they receive formative feedback.

Graduates with a PhD in Sociology from the University of Cyprus have gone on to careers in NGOs and the private sector as well as academia, working as postdoctoral researchers and adjunct Professors.

The PhD thesis is written in Greek or English.

There are a small number of scholarships available to students, but these are not comparable to those offered by funding bodies such as the Economic and Social Research Council and do not adequately cover the cost-of-living expenses. Receipt of this scholarship is conditional on students being prohibited from seeking additional funding or from working outside of the PhD. This places considerable financial pressure on students and who commented extensively on their financial difficulties.

The small number of students means that the PhD programme has little visibility internationally.

Strengths

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

1. Supervising faculty are strongly motivated to support their students throughout their PhD.

2. Faculty take seriously their QA responsibilities.

3. The PhD programme has clear aims.

4. The PhD in Sociology is supported by a dedicated and hardworking administrative team.

5. Students are strongly motivated and committed to their research.

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. Limited funding means students must work (often full time) impacting their focus and ability to work effectively on their research. The Department should work towards improving funding opportunities for students.
2. Students reported feeling isolated and lacking in community due to their small number and the need to work outside of the PhD. The department should consider ways to better integrate PhD students.
3. There is no academic professional development programme to support students in developing the key skills required to get an academic job. The department should introduce

a series of workshops covering issues like how to write an article for publication, where best to publish their work, how to present their research, how to give a job talk etc.

4. The Department should consider adopting a 2-supervisor model with one principal and one secondary supervisor to mitigate the vulnerabilities that can arise from a 1-to-1 dependence. This will also provide more junior members of staff with the opportunity to develop their experience and skills in PhD supervision.

5. There is very limited information on the Department website about the selection criteria and the content of the PhD programme. The Department should regularly update the website to ensure that the information is clear, accurate, up-to-date and easily accessible.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	**Compliant**
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	**Compliant**
1.3	Public information	**Partially Compliant**
1.4	Information management	**Compliant**

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

Sub-areas

1. **Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
2. **Practical training**
3. **Student assessment**

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. 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.*

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 supervision that is offererd is of good quality and PhD students felt supported by their supervisors and by administrative staff. They also appreciate that supervisors are experts on the subject. We noticed that PhD-students are supervised by one supervisor only. That makes them very dependent on that supervisor and may create vulnarabilities. PhD students have to do three exams, but it is not clear to the Committee what education PhD students are offered in preparation for the exams. There are only three PhD students. That makes it a very solitary endeavour. PhD students say they miss a peer community. On the other hand, they also express that they are not interested in meetings for PhD students, because the Graduate School did organise such meetings, because they have already such limited time to work on their project, because they have to do it next to work to earn money for a living, and then they do not want to spend time on extra's that are not of direct benefit to their PhD thesis.

A main problem is that there are few scholarships and scholarships are not enough to cover the cost of living in Cyprus. The PhD thesis is currently done in the form of a monograph. However, students would like to write papers when still working on their PhD and have the option to write either a monograph or a PhD thesis based on articles. The Committee strongly endorses the view of the PhD students. The students' affairs department offers workshops how to do a job interview and PhD students are offered to teach in the Department.

The Students Academic Affairs and Welfare Services offer workshops how to do a job interview, but these are not tailored to Sociology PhD students and workshops on how to publish are missing. A strong point is that PhD students are offered to teach in the Department.

Strengths

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

1. Thesis supervisors who are experts on the subject

2. The PhD opens opportunities for jobs in the public sector

3. The administrative staff is very supportive

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 committee would recommend having a primary and a secondary supervisor to reduce vulnerabilities.

2. Clearer progression milestones should be incorporated into the structure of the PhD programme, such as annual progression reports. With the current number of students the informal approach is adequate, however if the number increased a more structured approach is necessary.

3. In order to make the PhD project a less solitary trajectory the Department could consider offering the PhD students workshops on subjects they do recognise as beneficial for their PhD project.

4. Adequate scholarships would greatly benefit the PhD students. The Department might advocate for this to the leadership of the University.

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

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

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

eqar/// enqa.

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

1. **Teaching staff recruitment and development**
2. **Teaching staff number and status**
3. **Synergies of teaching and research**

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

eqar//// enqa.

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.*

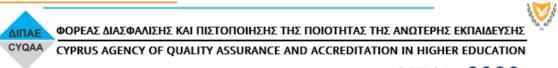## 2. Teaching staff number and status

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. 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)?*

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

eqar//// enqa.

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 in Sociology has very few students (currently 3). Given the 8 permanent teaching staff there are several staff who do not supervise at PhD level, partly due to lack of scholarships. The teaching staff are very committed to the programme. However, much is geared towards comprehensive exams in the early years in three basic areas of Sociology: Classical Sociological Theory, Contemporary Sociological Theory, Research Methods. The overall length varies from 3-8 years so that essentially graduates are part-time PhDs (who work part-time or even full-time) but are registered as full-time students. There are no seminars or workshops on offer at present to prepare PhD students for publications.

Strengths

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

1. PhD students are given the opportunity to act as teaching assistants which not only supplements their income but also provides them with valuable teaching experience which boosts their CVs.

2. There is a good balance between senior (3 staff) and junior (5 staff) in Sociology, with several junior staff (Lecturers) being recruited over the past 5 years since the last EEC report. However, only half the Sociology staff currently engage in PhD supervision and teaching.

3. Teaching staff interact very well with PhD students, most notably during the annual PhD workshop where students are given feedback based on presenting their research to staff and fellow students.

4. Sociology staff actively participate in CPD courses offered through the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Junior staff are particularly encouraged to avail of these courses.

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. We strongly suggest providing the option of a PhD by publication, with teaching staff providing a skills suite of workshops and seminars to prepare PhD students on key topics such as how to structure a PhD, how to publish in high-impact international journals, how to network successfully.

2. At least 1 further permanent teaching staff is needed once the proposed MA in Sociology launches. This new postgraduate programme is essential as a pathway towards the PhD.

3. Improve the promotion criteria and ensure that teaching staff are being rewarded for supervision at all levels when applying for promotion. The present model is not in line with international best practice. At present only 1 successfully supervised PhD student is required for promotion to full professor.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

1. **Student admission, processes and criteria**
2. **Student progression**
3. **Student recognition**
4. **Student certification**

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.*

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.*

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. **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?*

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

eqar/// enqa.

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.

For the admission to the PhD, the requirements are vague, and the inconsistency has been observed between the different documents and the webpage of the university. During the programme presentation it was mentioned that *'an MA from an accredited university is needed'* and, in some cases, a registration in MA courses might be asked, if deemed necessary by the Committee of Graduate Programmes. In the programme webpage is stated that '*Candidates should hold a Masters degree from an accredited University'* and in another paragraph there is s requirement for a copy of '*MA degree certificate or confirmation that the MA degree will be awarded shortly or confirmation concerning the candidate's position in a PhD course of an accredited university*'. Finally, in the application for evaluation, in the student admission requirements, only the general list of criteria for the graduate school are mentioned (without any reference to a master's degree).

The interdisciplinary character of the Department allows the PhD students to have a lot of feedback from fellow researchers and thus development of the PhD dissertation in many levels. However, this interdisciplinarity does not always work because the department lacks a doctoral community (all the students described the PhD as a lonely and isolated journey).

The structure of the PhD programme, as well as the student progression, are also unclear in the relevant documents. The PhD programme is based on a successful completion of Master courses and passing a comprehensive exam, thus there is not a required programme of studies.

Strengths

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

1. The stronger asset of the programme is its human resources (teaching staff and administrative staff, which fully supports the students).

2. The PhDs of University of Cyprus, in general, and this PhD in particular, offers to the students a prestige academic background and open the doors for employment.

3. The Department give opportunities for postdoctoral employment to the students. They are being offered classes to teach, within their research interests, as well as the opportunity to carry on administrative and mentoring tasks.

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 PhD Dissertation is compulsory to be a monograph and the opportunities for publishing articles during the PhD years are limited. The teaching staff should encourage and support more students writing articles during those years.

2. Even though there are efforts from the Department to bring the students together through conferences and workshops, there is a lack of interest. The Department could work more in this direction, in order to create a sense of community and professional culture opportunities for the PhD students.

3. In regards to their progression and professional development, the students mentioned that there are workshops offered with 'how to' thematic areas but these are organized by the Student Welfare Services and not from the Department, therefore they were general and not specific to their discipline.

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	**Partially 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

1. **Teaching and Learning resources**
2. **Physical resources**
3. **Human support resources**
4. **Student support**

---

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

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

eqar/// enqa.

- *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?*

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

eqar//// enqa.

Findings

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

The PhD in Sociology is in the Department of Social and Political Sciences located on the Aglantzia Campus. Students have access to the wider Campus facilities including a dining hall/cafeteria, sports facilities, student clubs and University administrative offices. Students are supervised by a faculty member and can write their thesis either in Greek or in English. The learning resource centre and the Library Stelios Ioannou is a thoughtfully designed building providing a very conducive study and reading space for students. Students are also supported by the department administrative team and through a centrally managed student support team. There is very limited funding in the form of scholarships for students.

Strengths

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

1. Students reported that they had very positive relationships with their supervisors who were extremely supportive of their work.

2. The library provides a really nice place to study.

3. The administrative staff provide good support to 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.

1. A lack of adequately funded scholarships is a severe limitation on the recruitment of students. The need to work (often full-time) distracts students focus away from their research and prolongs the PhD.

2. A set of workshops addressing key skills needed for success in the academic labour market would help promote integration and community within the department and better equip students to succeed post-PhD.

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

eqar/// enqa.

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

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

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

eqar/// enqa.

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

<u>**Sub-areas**</u>

1. **Selection criteria and requirements**
2. **Proposal and dissertation**
3. **Supervision and committees**

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*

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.*

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.*

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

eqar/// enqa.

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.

All but 1 student have successfully graduated from the Sociology PhD programme. The time for completing the programme varies between 3-8 years which is a vast range as 6-8 years would de facto be a part-time PhD. The international norm for a full-time PhD, ranges between 3-4 years max. The stages of the PhD programme are clear and include a comprehensive exam in 3 subfields: classical sociological theory, contemporary sociological theory, and research methods. There is currently no option of pursuing a PhD by publication (e.g. paper-based approach/4 journal articles).

The admission requirements include: a MA from an accredited university, good knowledge of English, a research proposal, interest by a faculty member to supervise the student, an interview with departmental Committee for Graduate Programmes. Students might also be asked to register in MA courses, if deemed necessary by the Committee. Please note that this information is adequately presented in the power point presentation during the visit, but neither in the application form for evaluation nor on the university's website.

The aims and objectives of the programme are clearly stated and include comprehensive exam and a doctoral dissertation. The learning outcomes are also clear and feasible. The criteria for obtaining a PhD are clear. Please note that this information is adequately presented in the power point presentation during the visit, but neither in the application form for evaluation nor on the university's website.

Strengths

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

1. Students appreciated the annual PhD workshop day as a way of interacting and obtaining feedback from peers and staff.

2. PhD dissertation topics are reflective of staff research interest and relate to current topical issues in Cypriot and wider society including migration, gender, nationalism, citizenship and trade union movements.

3. PhD students are provided with opportunities to teach in the undergraduate programmes which supplements their income and boosts their CVs in terms of teaching experience.

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. We strongly recommend offering a PhD by publication, for instance in the form of a paper-based approach (4 journal articles). This should be supplemented by workshops and seminars teaching PhD candidates about the structure of a PhD, how to publish, how to network as well as other essential skills needed. In this context a clear policy is needed about how to publish alone or together with the supervisor that safeguards against possible exploitation. Joint publications are beneficial in terms of career progression for both staff and students as are single-authored papers and both should be possible and offered as part of the PhD programme in Sociology.

2. More scholarships/funding need to be made available to attract high-calibre students and to ensure timely completion of the PhD (typically within 3-4 years max) to remain internationally competitive. This will ease the burden on students having to look for external work during their PhD studies.

3. The Department should work to create opportunities for all staff for gaining experience in PhD supervision as part of their professional development and this should be duly recognised when it comes to university promotions.

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

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

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 PhD in Sociology at the University of Cyprus is a unique and successful programme with several strengths including: annual PhD workshops to provide detailed feedback to PhD scholars and interaction between staff and students, teaching opportunities in the form of teaching on the undergraduate programme.

However, the EEC also noted several areas for improvement including: first and foremost Sociology should offer a PhD by publication (e.g. paper-based approach) as it boosts employability and career progression, accompanied by a clear policy on how to publish individually or together with the supervisor. We also believe that Sociology staff should offer workshops and seminars to prepare students in a more structured way for the PhD journey including how to publish, how to network, how to structure a PhD, how to manage a project, and how to manage one's time. Significantly more funding/scholarships is needed to attract high-calibre PhD students. Sociology should also further increase opportunities for PhD supervision for all staff.

Overall, we found the PhD in Sociology programme adequate. Our impression is that teaching and administrative staff are very enthusiastic and committed to the programme and that students have recognised and appreciated the many positive changes that have occurred since the previous EEC visit in February 2019. The programme corresponds to the EQF and is compliant in most areas of evaluation.

We invite the staff to respond to the recommendations in this evaluation report.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Professor Daniel Faas	
Professor Heather Hamill	
Professor Sawitri Saharso	
Anna Panayiotou	

Date: 24.01.2024