



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:

Πτυχίο Κοινωνιολογίας

In English:

Bachelor 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, the EEC report from the previous evaluation in 2019 along with exam paper samples and assessment samples.

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 Bachelor 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 Bachelor in Sociology.

Our overall impression of the visit was excellent. 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 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) The Bachelor in Sociology has an excellent and well-received Internship Programme.
- (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.
- (5) Substantial progress has been made since the last EEC Report in 2019, notably around the much-needed introduction of the new MA in Sociology

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.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
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:*
 - *selection criteria*
 - *intended learning outcomes*
 - *qualification awarded*
 - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
 - *pass rates*
 - *learning opportunities available to the students*
 - *graduate employment information*

4. Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
 - *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*

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The BA in Sociology at the University of Cyprus is a 4-year program during which students accrue 240 ECTs. It is located within the Department of Social and Political Sciences and is uniquely placed as the only BA in Sociology in Cyprus. The total number of students enrolled is 158, with an annual intake of 30-50 students. The student population is primary Greek Cypriot and 81% female. Students are admitted primarily through national exams. In 2023, the average graduate GPA was 7.3/10. The BA is taught by 8 permanent or tenure track academic staff (1 Full Professor, 2 Associate Professors, 1 Assistant Professor and 4 Lecturers) and by teaching adjuncts.

The programme's purpose and objectives are clearly stated in the application and were articulated and understood by all members of staff interviewed, as are the intended learning outcomes that fall within the EQF. In years 1 and 2 students take compulsory core courses in theory and methods; additional option papers are taken in years 3 and 4. The core courses are taught in Greek and a significant number of readings listed in the sample reading lists for option papers are also in the Greek language. Students are assessed using a range of formative and summative assessment methods. Each course must have at least two evaluation methods, one of which is the final examination, which cannot exceed 60% of the grade. Other assessment methods include oral examinations, group work exercises, presentations, and quizzes. In the 4th year, the Bachelor thesis is optional and currently only available to students with an average 7 GPA or above. Students not writing a thesis elect two additional option courses. Students with an average 7 GPA or above also have the opportunity to do a 2-month internship during the summer between the 3rd and 4th year with a partner organisation in Cyprus.

The University of Cyprus has Quality Assurance Policy and an internal Quality Assurance System which are applied to all programmes of study. The QA tools include course and instructor evaluation by students at the end of each semester, student satisfaction and exit surveys and key performance indicators such as student/instructor ratio, number of applications, drop-out rate, course success rate. These are all clearly understood by members of staff. In addition to these formal structures, staff communicate well with one another, co-teach, and support one another in course design, development and delivery. Students are actively involved in the QA process and are represented on all relevant committees.

Graduates in the BA Sociology have gone on to work in the public and private sector in a variety of fields including but not limited to social research. The transferable skills of critical thinking and the ability to collect and analyse different types of data are valuable labour market assets. The institutionalisation of the internship programme linking the Department to a range of social, political, and cultural institutions in Cyprus provides a direct pathway for students to access the Cypriot labour market.

The standards on BA in Sociology are compatible with equivalent programmes internationally but the potential to attract international students is limited by the requirement that the core courses are taught in Greek.

Strengths

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

The BA in Sociology has many strengths. These include:

1. Faculty have a strong sense of shared mission and purpose to deliver a high quality of education and are strongly motivated in their desire to see the department develop and improve in teaching and research. This is reinforced by a culture of collegiality and mutual support.
2. Faculty take seriously their QA responsibilities.
3. The internship programme provides an enriching experience for students and is a direct pathway to employment. It is an excellent example of innovation and adaptation to the current employment needs of students.
4. The BA in Sociology has clear aims and objectives and is coherent in its approach and content exposing students to core theory and research methods alongside option papers addressing a range of contemporary socio-political issues.
5. The BA in Sociology is supported by a dedicated and hardworking administrative team.

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 faculty is relatively small which means that some key areas, such as the environment/climate issues are not covered in option papers. Additional academic posts would allow for a more comprehensive coverage of socio-political issues and enrich the educational experience for students.
2. Increasingly, international Master's degrees in the social sciences require a BA thesis as part of their admissions criteria. The Department should strongly consider making the thesis compulsory in the 4th year. However, this can only be successful if there is modification to the existing courses to provide students with the skills necessary to successfully write a thesis in the 4th year of study. Crucially, teaching staff must be given credit for thesis supervision.

3. The Department may wish to review the balance between instruction and reading in the Greek and English languages in light of the aim to internationalise.
4. The highly successful internship programme should receive the necessary resources to expand and adapt to the needs of students.
5. Students reported that there were timetabling clashes between compulsory and option papers meaning that their choice of options was severely limited. The process of timetabling should be reviewed in order to prevent this from happening.
6. The Department (along with the rest of the University) uses the central IT system (Bannerweb) for all course information, including enrolment to option papers. Students reported that this system regularly gets overloaded and can be inaccessible for long periods of time. The Department needs to advocate to the central University, on behalf of students, to ensure adequate investment in IT to ensure that this system is as robust and usable as possible.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ 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

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 objective is that teaching should use a variety of pedagogical methods and students should be encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process. A critique mentioned in the previous evaluation was that teaching was not oriented towards two-way communication but more in the tradition of a classical form, from teacher to student. An objective is also to offer participatory learning methods that emphasize teamwork.

From the texts we received containing course descriptions it was not directly obvious if these objectives were met and the criticisms taken to heart, because the learning objectives were in some courses described only in terms of knowledge transmission, suggesting passive learning, or described in rather general terms. After the meetings and presentation, however, we believe that in the written material the Department is selling itself short. Social problems, we were explained, are now addressed in the teaching and staff members gave many examples of how they encouraged students to interpret social issues using sociological theory. In classes group discussions take place. In the courses many different methods are used, including writing a blog or the use of audiovisual material, students have in one course the option to make a documentary or short film. This method and other methods require student collaboration. The Department's policy is to offer different research assignments in different courses, so that students will meet with a variety of assignments.

The Department's self-stated objective is to gain expertise about contemporary sociological issues, In the previous evaluation students' criticism was that theory was not made relevant to contemporary society, challenges facing society or social change. Also, practical and theoretical studies be interconnected. In the previous evaluation there was student criticism of failure to have practical assignments.

Much of the above critique is met in the current programme, as described above. We want to add to that that we believe the Internship Programme that was implemented by the Department for the undergraduate Sociology programme since 2019 is very valuable. It is a way for students to experience that their theoretical knowledge is relevant to address social problems, and to meet prospective employers, and it addresses the problem that in Cyprus there is still a lack of recognition of sociology as a study area.

We had a long discussion on the bachelor thesis, which is currently optional, while the Committee believes the thesis should be made mandatory, as explained in the recommendations below.

Students' assessment should be transparent and objective and test whether intended learning outcomes have been achieved. A well-known and helpful instrument to check whether all subject areas and objectives of the course are covered by the assessment methods is by using a matrix. The Department does not use a matrix. Instead, lecturers give detailed instructions, are transparent about what they expect from students and extensive feedback is given to students on their assignments, thus establishing if the extended learning outcomes have been achieved and supporting student learning.

Strengths

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

1. The internship program
2. The innovative and creative teaching methods
3. The enthusiasm and commitment of the teaching team

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 believe that the bachelor thesis should be made mandatory. It is an important part of academic training, and it increases students' employability on the academic job market. A condition is, however, that lecturers get credits for thesis supervision, which is currently not the case. Another issue is that students often dread the thesis, as they are afraid of failing and not all students are convinced that the thesis brings added value on the job market. A suggestion from the committee is to structure the thesis writing by offering a course on how to write a thesis with strict deadlines (literature review, formulate research question, etc.) and only after that, start with the individual supervision. It might also help to convince the students and motivate them, by working with societal stakeholders, i.e. organizations that formulate a knowledge need, so that students know the results of their thesis are wanted and it is also a way to increase the visibility of the student and of the discipline, as a problem is that in Cyprus there is still a lack of recognition of sociology as a study area.
2. Although new staff is hired, the small number of teaching staff still is a problem. The Department tries to solve this by using special teaching staff; about 25% of the teaching is done by adjuncts, regularly people who did their PhD in the Department. While it is appreciated that the Department thus offers them a job opportunity, the situation is far from ideal. If the Department wants to realize its ambitions to offer top education, more regular staff is needed.
3. The internship programme could be expanded and also efforts made to make it more inclusive to a wider range of students with a variety of skillsets.
4. Looking at the reading lists, we noticed that most of the literature prescribed in the courses is in Greek. It would be good to gradually increase the number of English texts, particularly in the third and fourth year, so that students read texts in the original language and get a more international outlook. International guest lecturers could be invited to familiarize students with listening to and speaking English.
5. The different standards and methods of assessment used across the courses creates a risk that instructors may have different standards that may disadvantage students which has implications

for the wider quality assessment of the programme. It might therefore be wise considering some form of standardization of the assessment procedures.

6. Research-led teaching is currently understood as bringing in lecturers' own research expertise in the teaching. The committee recommends considering involving students more in research activities.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
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

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

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)?*

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.

Sociology currently has a staff:student ratio of 1:20 which is the highest in the Department even though several new staff have been hired since 2019. With the launch of the much-needed new MA in Sociology, at least 1 further permanent member of staff is needed. All Sociology staff we met were enthusiastic and committed to their discipline and programme offerings. They endorse the principle of research-led teaching. The depth and breadth of teaching on offer in the Bachelor Programme in Sociology is remarkable given the currently 8 permanent staff.

Strengths

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

1. Teaching and research duties are well balanced. Approximately 30% for research, teaching and administration each with junior staff reporting less time on administrative duties. Synergies between teaching and research are generally good following research-led teaching.
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. The tenure track pathway is clear and adjuncts are also encouraged to research and progress.
3. Teaching staff employ a wide variety of at times innovative teaching and assessment techniques including visual projects (graffiti, documentaries, photography), and student-led classes.
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.
5. On several occasions, teaching staff were nominated by students and recognised by the university for their teaching excellence which not only speaks to the impact of the BA Sociology but also indicates the very positive relationship between staff and 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. At least 1 further permanent teaching staff is needed once the proposed MA in Sociology launches. This new postgraduate programme is essential both as a recruitment base for the PhD in Sociology and as an offering for BA graduates for further studies.
2. 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. Supervision load should also be factored into general workload models.
3. Reduce the reliance on adjuncts. At present around 25% of the BA Sociology programme is taught by adjuncts.
4. Review and update module reading lists to ensure, wherever feasible, to have more current readings (e.g. journal articles published in the last 5-10 years). And also ensure percentages are indicated on the module outline regarding weighting of assessments.
5. The balance between Greek and English language could be further improved notably through:
(a) ensuring that all modules especially in third and fourth year have at least some readings in English, and (b) incorporating high profile international speakers (at least virtually) into undergraduate modules in addition to the current local guest speakers.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
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?*

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 vast majority of the newly admitted undergraduate students enters the programme after succeeding in the national Pancyprian Examinations organized by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth for admission into establishments of higher education in Cyprus.

There are 6 other methods of entering the undergraduate programme, apart from the Pancyprian Examinations, however as the programme language of instruction is Greek, the candidates must demonstrate in any case a good knowledge of the Greek language. The other 6 methods are the following:

1. Admissions based on Special Criteria (candidates must have taken the Pancyprian Examinations and meet certain special criteria, as these are set out in the Rules and Regulations of Academic and Student Affairs). These candidates may seek a limited number of places (14% of all Cypriot admissions).
2. Athletes with top distinguished in sports or persons distinguished in International Olympiads (as defined by the Council of University of Cyprus) may be admitted into the programme without examinations, simply on the basis of their Lyceum Leaving Certificate.
3. Entry on the basis of Panhellenic Examinations (10% of the total number of places offered through the Pancyprian Examinations). Cypriots who reside permanently in Greece may participate in these examinations as well.
4. Entry on the basis of International Examinations, as an additional number of available positions (3% of admissions from Cyprus). The positions can be claimed on the basis of results of international examinations such as GCE/GCSE, International Baccalaureate (IB) or other equivalent examinations.
5. Turkish-Cypriots are admitted on the basis of their school leaving certificate (six-grade secondary schools located in the northern part of Cyprus) or after passing special written or oral examinations organized by the Department of the undergraduate programme.
6. Internal/external transfers or Second Degree places are offered (limited number of positions) after recommendation given by the Undergraduate Studies Committee, based on academic merit and availability of said positions.

The students' progression is assessed in various ways. The process, forms and criteria are determined by the instructor of each module, considering the content, nature, particularities and degree of difficulty of each module of the course. In any case, the instructor must adopt at least 2 evaluation methods, one of which is the final written examination. The other methods must not exceed 40% of the final grade.

The BA of Sociology is rarely the 1st choice of the candidate students.

The main existing international cooperation of the BA is the Erasmus programme (exchange of both teaching staff and students).

Strengths

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

1. Limited number of students in every class (min.25 – max.80), giving the space and opportunity for interactive teaching and learning.
2. Reinforcement of practical competences of students via more communicative and participative methods, methodological course, group work assignments and internship programme of the department (which constitutes an innovative solution and achievement of the Department).
3. The recognition of Sociology in the Cypriot labour market was strengthened through the Internship Programme (implemented since 2019) and the students feel that has significantly improved/increased the employment conditions and competitiveness of graduates.
4. The content of the programme and the teaching staff is considered as the greater advantage of the programme by its 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. The lack of opportunities in the Cypriot labor market for graduates of sociology is a disadvantage of the programme. The Department needs to continue to consider the relevancy of Sociology to employers. The BA of Sociology is rarely the 1st choice of applicants with the consequence of Sociology losing the best students to other programmes. And students for whom Sociology is not their first choice are less engaged with the programme. The programme can further increase their visibility and competitiveness through outreach initiatives such as the internship programme, schools visiting days, seminars on Sociology and higher-profile events.
2. The Bachelor thesis is currently optional and offered only to students with a GPA over 7 out of 10. We believe the thesis should be made mandatory for all students in order to enhance their research skills and competitiveness of those who want to proceed to postgraduate work.
3. Apart from the Erasmus programme, the BA can enhance its international cooperation with institutions outside Cyprus and apart from Greek-speaking institutions in order to broaden students' horizons.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ 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

- 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.*

- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The BA 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 supplied with a large reading list for all courses. As the compulsory courses are taught in Greek, a significant proportion of the reading list is also in Greek. This is less so for the option papers where recent research is most likely to be published in English and not yet translated into Greek.

The learning resource centre and the Library Stelios Ioannou is a thoughtfully designed building and provides 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.

Strengths

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

1. Students reported that academic staff were very helpful and responsive, and they enjoyed their classes. They felt supported in their learning and were appreciative of the efforts academic staff made to make the class discussions relevant to their experience and to Cypriot life.
2. Class sizes are small and facilitate lively group discussions.
3. The library provides a really nice place to study.
4. Faculty go to considerable efforts to support students in reading English language articles and publications.
5. The internship programme is an enriching learning experience and provides a direct pathway to employment for students.
6. The administrative staff provide good support to students before and during admissions and during the years of study and graduation process.

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 students expressed their dissatisfaction with the electronic system of the University (Bannerweb), especially during the course registration period. Due to the high number of users, the system does not work properly and is often out of use for long periods. This is a source of considerable stress and anxiety for students.
2. Continued and enhanced support for students in reading English language publications, as a key transferable skill in the labour market.
3. Students reported the need for a larger number of key texts to be made available in the library. Currently key texts are only available for two hours via the short-loan system and this does not give students enough time to read them adequately.
4. Continued support for the internship programme.
5. Students expressed their dissatisfaction with the computer facilities available to them and the Department should advocate for updated IT equipment.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ 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



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

Sub-areas

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

N/A

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.*



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.

N/A

Strengths

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

N/A

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.

N/A

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
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 Bachelor in Sociology at the University of Cyprus is a unique and very successful programme with many strengths including: very enthusiastic and committed teaching staff, a strong sense of collegiality within the Department, effective administrative support and excellent library building, an outstanding and well-received Internship Programme, breadth and depth with regard to the module offerings in the Bachelor in Sociology programme, a forthcoming MA in Sociology which is essential strategically in terms of moving Sociology onto the next level, a clear strategic vision of Sociology as a single unit/department to further profile its standing within the university.

However, the EEC also noted several areas for improvement including: first and foremost Sociology should consider making the BA thesis (currently optional for those with GPA over 7.0 and 12 ECTS) mandatory as a dissertation should be a core component of any Sociology undergraduate programme equipping students with essential skills particularly for transitioning to further studies; it also endorses and amplifies the principle of research-led teaching in the university. At least 1 further permanent member of staff should be added especially in light of the launch of the much-needed MA in Sociology. The reliance on adjuncts (currently 25%) needs to be reduced. Moreover, care is needed in timetabling to avoid clashes between electives and core modules. A significant source of stress for students is the unreliability of the BannerWeb system and more investment in this is clearly needed. Staff should also consider a better balance between Greek and English readings on module outlines and inclusion of international speakers.

Overall, we were very satisfied with how the staff have organised their Bachelor in Sociology programme. 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 all areas of evaluation.

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



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Professor Daniel Faas	
Professor Heather Hamill	
Professor Sawitri Saharso	
Anna Panayiotou	

Date: 24.01.2024