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Date: 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019

# External evaluation report

- **Higher education institution:**  
**University of Cyprus**

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **Programme of study**

**In Greek:** ΠΤΥΧΙΟ ΠΡΟΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

**In English:** PROGRAMME OF STUDIES FOR BACHELOR  
DEGREE IN EDUCATION – PRE-PRIMARY  
SCHOOL TEACHING

ECTS: 240

Duration: 8 semesters, 4 years

- **Language of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status**  
**Currently operating:** X

**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 and 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015 and N. 47(I)/2016].**

## A. Introduction

On Friday the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019, the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the site in question, with the following indicative schedule:

8:30 – 13:00

- Briefing of EEC with Emily Mouskou
- A meeting with the Vice Rector of the Institution and the Vice Head and members of the Internal Evaluation Committee.
- A meeting with the Vice Head of the relevant department and the programme Coordinators.

Short presentations of:

- The School's / Department's structure
- The curriculum (e.g. philosophy, allocation of courses per semester, teaching methodologies, admission criteria for prospective students, student assessment, final exams)
- Methodology and equipment used in teaching and learning were introduced.
- Discussion on the content: examples of the programme courses

13:00 – 14:00 Working lunch of the EEC, with the CYQAA Officer only

- The EEC visited the new university library as well as a music lab.

14:00 – 17:30 (indicative time)

- A meeting with students
- A meeting with alumni and the representative of the Ministry of Education
- A meeting with members of the teaching staff
- Discussion on the research interests, research activity), on any other duties in the institution and teaching obligations in other programmes
- A meeting with members of the administrative staff.
- On site visit to the premises of the institution

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Michel Vandebroeck	Professor; EEC Committee Chair	Ghent University
Leena Krokfors	Professor; EEC Committee Member	University of Helsinki
Arniika Kuusisto	Professor; EEC Committee Member	Stockholm University
Maria Korai	Student representative; EEC Committee Member	Cyprus University of Technology

### 1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

#### 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*
- *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*
  - *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*
- *Public information (clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible):*
  - *about the programme of study offered*
  - *the selection criteria*
  - *the intended learning outcomes*
  - *the qualification awarded*
  - *the teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *the pass rates*
  - *the learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

Mark from 1 to 10 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
1.1	Academic oversight of the programme design is ensured	7
1.2	The guide and / or the regulations for quality assurance provide the adequate information and data for the support and management of the programme of study for all the years of study.	9
1.3	Internal Quality Assurance processes safeguard the quality and the fulfillment of the programme's purpose, objectives and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Particularly, the following are taken into consideration:	
1.3.1	The disclosure of the programme's curricula to the students and their implementation by the teaching staff	8
1.3.2	The programme webpage information and material	8
1.3.3	The procedures for the fulfillment of undergraduate and postgraduate assignments / practical training	8
1.3.4	The procedures for the conduct and the format of the examinations and for student assessment	8

1.3.5	Students' participation procedures for the improvement of the programme and of the educational process	6
1.4	The purpose and objectives of the programme are consistent with the expected learning outcomes and with the mission and the strategy of the institution.	9
1.5	The following ensure the achievement of the programme's purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes:	
1.5.1	The number of courses	9
1.5.2	The programme's content	8
1.5.3	The methods of assessment	9
1.5.4	The teaching material	8
1.5.5	The equipment	10
1.5.6	The balance between theory and practice	10
1.5.7	The research orientation of the programme	9
1.5.8	The quality of students' assignments	n/a
1.6	The expected learning outcomes of the programme are known to the students and to the members of the teaching staff.	7
1.7	The teaching and learning process is adequate and effective for the achievement of the expected learning outcomes.	9
1.8	The content of the programme's courses reflects the latest achievements / developments in science, arts, research and technology.	7
1.9	New research results are embodied in the content of the programme of study.	7
1.10	The content of foundation courses is designed to prepare the students for the first year of their chosen undergraduate degree.	n/a
1.11	Students' command of the language of instruction is appropriate.	n/a
1.12	The programme of study is structured in a consistent manner and in sequence, so that concepts operating as preconditions precede the teaching of other, more complex and cognitively more demanding, concepts.	9
1.13	The learning outcomes and the content of the courses are consistent.	7
1.14	The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied and there is correspondence between credits, workload and expected learning outcomes per course and per semester.	8

1.15	The higher education qualification awarded to the students corresponds to the purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes of the programme.	9
1.16	The higher education qualification and the programme of study conform to the provisions for registration to their corresponding professional and vocational bodies for the purpose of exercising a particular profession.	9
1.17	The programme's management in regard to its design, its approval, its monitoring and its review, is in place.	6
1.18	The programme's collaborations with other institutions provide added value and are compared positively with corresponding collaborations of other departments / programmes of study in Europe and internationally.	6
1.19	Procedures are applied so that the programme conforms to the scientific and professional activities of the graduates.	10
1.20	The admission requirements are appropriate.	n/a
1.21	Sufficient information relating to the programme of study is posted publicly.	9
1.22	The teaching methodology is suitable for teaching in higher education.	9

### Strengths:

Very good equipment, including the new library and the facilities for the students on campus. The balance and the relationship between theory and practice. The School Experience I-III are well integrated in the succession of first the theoretical knowledge, then followed by didactics, then implementations to practice in classroom as well as reflection on the practice. The four years of studies include a cyclical structure where this is implemented in several stages.

The alignment between curriculum and the employers expectations (public preschools) is very strong and the warrants the future employability of the students.

The EEC was positively impressed of the programme's academic staff as regards their commitment, knowledgeability, reflexivity and qualification.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

The most important room for improvement is increasing the transparency of the internal quality procedures and making them more explicit. The students evaluate every course, however, the evaluation is merely utilized as feedback to individual teachers, even if more could be done with the data without breaching the anonymity or privacy. The overview of, for instance, the students' experiences of the workload and other comparable markers of each course could be monitored and discussed in the level of the whole programme with the staff.

In addition, when revising the curriculum, it would be important to include student representatives in the process.

Stating the more explicit the intended learning outcomes and goals for each course would improve the transparency in all levels as well as benefit the alignment of the programme. The EEC is convinced by the quality of the programme due to the commitment of the staff as expressed by the academics in the site visit, yet the sustainability of this quality would be

enhanced by making the internal quality proceedings more explicit. This would also ensure the continuity of the quality in cases of staff turnover.

The EEC is convinced that the academic staff has well resourced opportunities for carrying out research, both in terms of the regular opportunities for Sabbatical terms, conference / literature funding and the balance between teaching load and research time. However, we found that this was not always reflected in the course literature for the students in terms of most recent Early Childhood Education related readings.

We were unable to evaluate the elements marked with n/a, due to either the availability of the figures (e.g. success rates, employability records [below], number of incoming / outgoing Erasmus students).

As regards the evaluation criteria specifying the need to periodically review the programme in the light of the changing needs of society, the EEC is concerned about how the increasing diversity in the Cypriot society is taken into account across the programme. In particular, how the students are prepared to work in multicultural, multireligious, multilingual environments, and to work with families in poverty, beyond the differentiation and individualization of the general pedagogical approach, in order to foster social cohesion and social inclusion.

Finally, the EEC wonders why the subject area and the academic staff's offices are not located at the university main campus, and hopes this does not reflect the position of the subject area within the disciplinary range.

*Provide information on:*

1. Employability records.

The EEC does not have the exact figures, however, the graduates of this programme was estimated by the alumni as the most sought after teaching staff in pre-primary settings in comparison to those graduating from other institutions.

2. Pass rate per course/semester

According to the teaching staff, students and alumni, literally all students graduate from the programme by if not their fourth year, at least within the permitted time scale.

3. The correspondence of exams' and assignments' content to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS

The EEC regards these to be in place.

**Study programme and study programme's design and development: *Substantially compliant***

## 2. Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3)

### Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development and respects their needs.*

- *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.*
- *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.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for and 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.*

Mark from 1 to 10 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
2.1	The actual/expected number of students in each class allows for constructive teaching and communication.	10
2.2	The actual/expected number of students in each class compares positively to the current international standards and/or practices.	10
2.3	There is an adequate policy for regular and effective communication with students.	7
2.4	The methodology implemented in each course leads to the achievement of the course's purpose and objectives and those of the individual modules.	8
2.5	Constructive formative assessment for learning and feedback are regularly provided to the students.	9



2.6	The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate, and known to the students.	9
2.7	Educational activities which encourage students' active participation in the learning process are implemented.	8
2.8	Teaching incorporates the use of modern educational technologies that are consistent with international standards, including a platform for the electronic support of learning.	8
2.9	Teaching materials (books, manuals, journals, databases, and teaching notes) meet the requirements set by the methodology of the programme's individual courses and are updated regularly.	8
2.10	It is ensured that teaching and learning are continuously enriched by research.	9
2.11	The programme promotes students' research skills and inquiry learning.	10
2.12	Students are adequately trained in the research process.	10

### Strengths:

Research orientation of the programme, both in terms of the method courses and as regards the staff research resources.

Throughout the programme there is attention to reflexive competencies of the students.

The well-resourced learning/ teaching environment: optimal staff/student ratio, well-equipped labs, excellent new library with remote access to relevant resources (e.g. journals).

### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

The reflective competence of the students could be even more enhanced if there was more space for the students' initiative in choosing the project topic for School Experience III. Also, the EEC wonders whether it is necessary as regards both teaching staff allocation and student work load (stress levels at that particular time period in the study programme were experienced as high by the students) to for example numerically evaluate all the 75 lesson plans of each student. Perhaps a more qualitative constructive reflection could support the reflective competences of the students and encourage a stronger sense of autonomy in the learner.

From our discussions with the teachers, we have gained the impression that the teaching methods are well designed, but again the sustainability (in cases of staff turnover etc., see above) would be improved if these were more explicitly expressed.

The ability for students to express their views and to file complaints could perhaps benefit of being more separated from that available for the staff, in order to lower the threshold of accessing it.

Teaching, learning and student assessment: **Substantially compliant**

### 3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

#### Standards

- *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 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).*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Assessment of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*

Mark from 1 to 10 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
3.1	The number of full-time teaching staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, and their fields of expertise, adequately support the programme of study.	10
3.2	The members of teaching staff for each course have the relevant formal and fundamental qualifications for teaching the course, including the following:	
3.2.1	Subject specialisation	10
3.2.2	Research and Publications within the discipline	10
3.2.3	Experience / training in teaching in higher education	10
3.3	The programme attracts visiting professors of recognized academic standing.	9
3.4	The specialisations of visiting professors adequately support the programme of study.	9
3.5	Special teaching staff and special scientists have the necessary qualifications, adequate work experience and specialisation to teach a limited number of courses in the programme of study.	10

3.6	In the programme of study, the ratio of the number of courses taught by full-time staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, to the number of courses taught by part-time staff, ensures the quality of the programme of study.	10
3.7	The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff supports and safeguards the programme's quality.	10
3.8	The teaching load allows for the conduct of research and contribution to society.	10
3.9	The programme's coordinator has the qualifications and experience to coordinate the programme of study.	10
3.10	The results of the teaching staff's research activity are published in international journals with the peer-reviewing system, in international conferences, conference minutes, publications etc.	10
3.11	The teaching staff is provided with adequate training opportunities in teaching methods, adult education and new technologies.	10
3.12	Feedback processes for teaching staff in regard to the evaluation of their teaching work, by the students, are satisfactory.	7

### Strengths:

The ECC is very impressed by the qualifications of the teaching staff and the resources they have for carrying out research. These are compliant with the highest international standards. They are also contributing to the society both in terms of policy and practice.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

As regards 3.12, see the justifications given above.

Teaching Staff: **Fully compliant**

## 4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*
- *Information on students, like 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, is collected, monitored and analysed.*

- *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.*
- *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.*
- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students, as well as students with disabilities).*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Students are involved in evaluating the teaching staff.*
- *Students' mobility is encouraged and supported.*

Mark from 1 to 10 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
4.1	The student admission requirements for the programme of study are based on specific regulations and suitable criteria that are favourably compared to international practices.	9
4.2	The award of the higher education qualification is accompanied by the diploma supplement which is in line with European and international standards.	10
4.3	The programme's evaluation mechanism, by the students, is effective.	7
4.4	Students' participation in exchange programmes is compared favourably to similar programmes across Europe.	6
4.5	There is a student welfare service that supports students in regard to academic, personal problems and difficulties.	9
4.6	Statutory mechanisms, for the support of students and the communication with the teaching staff, are effective.	8
4.7	Mentoring of each student is provided and the number of students per each permanent teaching member is adequate.	10
4.8	Flexible options / adaptable to the personal needs or to the needs of students with special needs, are provided.	9

#### 4.9 Students are satisfied with their learning experiences.

10

The EEC wants to make a note that the actual regulations regarding student admission are beyond the jurisdiction of the university.

Also, we did not have access to the more precise information on students, such as the key performance indicators, exact success and drop-out rates, and the overall student satisfaction with their programme.

##### Strengths:

The students express high appreciation of the learning experience as well as the way in which they are supported in the programme.

There is a high success rate for completion of the programme and high employability for the graduates.

##### Areas of improvement:

Support and encouragement for the student internationalisation could be further enhanced. It was expressed by the teaching staff that the three optional courses included in the programme could well be replaced by courses taken abroad. This could be more strongly embedded in the programme structures by for example promoting the possibility for later international (Erasmus) exchange by already informing for the first year students about that. Also, the obligatory language courses of the programme could be aligned with the potential target country, together with the promotion of further language studies. This would diminish the now expressed worry of the students for possibly getting behind in their study programme due to international mobility. In addition, both the incoming, outgoing, and those students (e.g. with family) who are not able to do an exchange themselves, would all benefit from having some more courses in English embedded in the programme. For those students less competent with English language, optional foundational courses could be recommended.

Also, as elaborated further below, although a general procedure for student complaints is in place, a specific procedure for student appeals could work towards lowering the threshold for students to have their voices heard.

Students: **Substantially compliant**

## 5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

### Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, financial, physical and human support resources\*) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*

\* *Physical resources: premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, etc.*

*Human support resources: tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff*

- *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.*
- *Teaching staff is involved in the management of financial resources regarding the programme of study.*

Mark from 1 to 10 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
5.1	Adequate and modern learning resources are available to the students.	9
5.2	The library includes the latest books and material that support the programme.	8
5.3	The library loan system facilitates students' studies.	10
5.4	The laboratories adequately support the programme.	9
5.5	Student welfare services are of high quality.	9
5.6	Statutory administrative mechanisms for monitoring and supporting students are sufficient.	8
5.7	Suitable books and reputable journals support the programme of study.	10
5.8	An internal communication platform supports the programme of study.	9
5.9	The equipment used in teaching and learning (laboratory and electronic equipment, consumables etc.) are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate.	9
5.10	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are adequate and accessible to students.	8
5.11	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are updated regularly with the most recent publications.	8

### Strengths:

The newly opened library is well equipped, also with remote access facilities.

The labs are well equipped, and there is suitable funds for updating when needed.

The resources match the highest international standards.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

The students' reading lists could be complemented with the most recent (international) Early Childhood Education literature.

The children's section in the library does not reflect the societal diversity in Cyprus. The library children's literature area could be complemented with books, to match the variety of children's home languages in preschools. This could enhance the visibility of – and also encourage the support for – children's home languages, religions and cultures later on when the students are working in preschools.

**Resources:** *Substantially compliant*

### Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC was generally impressed by the commitment and knowledgeability of the academic staff, their qualifications, the material resources, the support for research and international mobility of the research staff. Some recurrent issues that could perhaps be further developed include the following:

- The deepening of the presence and understanding of societal diversity in the curriculum of the programme. The EEC has the impression that the pedagogy of diversity is reduced to a pedagogy of individualization and differentiation, while the current international literature holds out a deeper understanding of emerging prejudices, social cohesion and social inclusion, and understanding the needs of the families and children living in poverty as well as the well-being of potentially trauma-affected children.
- The structures for supporting and facilitating international mobility of the students (both incoming, outgoing, and the internationalization@home) could be rethought and strengthened (see the more specific remarks above).
- The possible procedures of making the aims and goals of the expected learning outcomes of the courses as well as their position in the wider programme could be made more explicit.
- Making the internal quality monitoring systems more transparent. This regards ensuring that student voices are taken into account both as regards the programme as a whole and the individual courses as well as the cumulative work load of particular semesters. In so doing, this could contribute to ensuring the sustainability of the programme quality in case of staff turnover.

The EEC appreciated the open discussions with the teachers, academics and students as well as the opportunities to meet the administrative staff, the alumni, and the representative of the Ministry of Education. However, in the future, perhaps it would be advisable to ensure that each group of stakeholders would be met separately in order to facilitate the free expression of experiences.

### C. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Michel Vandebroeck</b>	
<b>Leena Krokfors</b>	
<b>Arniika Kuusisto</b>	
<b>Maria Korai</b>	

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019 in Nicosia, Cyprus