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

- **Higher Education Institution:**

University of Cyprus

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Faculty of Social Sciences and Education

- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Social and Political Science

- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Master of Arts in in Peace, Conflict and Democracy
(1,5 years, 90 ECTS)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English

- Programme's status: pending
- Concentrations (if any): N/A

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 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The visit was conducted online via Zoom. We did not conduct an onsite visit due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We were made very welcome and had an extremely productive day, without any technical problems.

The Evaluation team met the Vice-Rector, Irene-Anna Diakidoy, and the Chair of the Department of Social and Political Science, Antonis Ellinas, along with Iosif Kovras and Yiannis Papadakis. In addition we met other faculty members, including Costas M. Constantinou, Daniela Dunno, Nayia Kamenou, Antis Loizides, Michalis Moutselos, and Dimitris Trimithiotis. We also met several students (current and former MA and PhD students), and staff from the administration, the Department Secretary and a Librarian.

We were impressed by the quality of the scholarship of the faculty. The material provided in advance of the visit was valuable. The Interviews added invaluable additional information.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Scott Gates	Professor	University of Oslo and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
Kristine Höglund	Professor	Uppsala University
Stefanie Kappler	Associate Professor	Durham University
Pantelis A. Maki	Postgraduate Student	Open University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*
- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
 - (a) sub-areas*
 - (b) standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
 - (c) some questions that EEC may find useful.*
- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*
- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*
- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*
- **The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.**

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

- 1.1 Policy for quality assurance
- 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
- 1.3 Public information
- 1.4 Information management

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
 - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
 - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
 - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
 - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
 - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
 - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
 - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
 - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
 - *benefits from external expertise*
 - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*

- o *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
- o *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
- o *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
- o *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
- o *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
- o *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- o *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
 - o *key performance indicators*
 - o *profile of the student population*
 - o *student progression, success and drop-out rates*

- o *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
 - o *learning resources and student support available*
 - o *career paths of graduates*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***

- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

Findings

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

We find the elements of the application for a new MA in Peace, Conflict and Democracy to be in compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESGs).

We find that there is strong potential for the successful establishment of an international MA programme on peace, conflict and democracy. The interdisciplinary focus is highly suitable for the themes of study and is in line with the profile of the department. The international profile of the programme also fits with the broader goal to internationalize the Department of Social and Political Science. This aim is consistent with that of the University of Cyprus as a whole.

The design of the new programme stems from the efforts of the department. The faculty of the Department of Social and Political Science is highly engaged and enthusiastic about the programme. The programme is designed with a set of core, compulsory courses and a set of electives, plus a 30 credits of dissertation that jointly ensure that the students fulfill the learning outcomes of the programme.

Students appear as well informed about the proposed programme and are supportive. Indeed, some would opt to join the new MA if given a choice.

There is an adequate policy for quality assurance. The programme is well-designed with on-going self-monitoring and review. External review will occur periodically. Information about the programme will be public and managed. The teaching and research faculty, administrative staff, and students have different responsibilities in maintaining quality assurance. Academic integrity and freedom are protected.

More attention could be given to international marketing to ensure recruitment of students with relevant profiles. The MA programme could have the potential to attract extremely high quality students. Attention should be devoted to recruitment of students beyond Cyprus and Greece, including but not limited to the EU countries, the UK, the USA, East Asia, South Asia, Middle East and (North and Sub-Saharan) Africa.

Strengths

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

A core strength of the programme stems from its interdisciplinary design and approach, which is suitable both for the field of study and the profile of the teaching staff. The faculty are already working in an interdisciplinary environment, with Sociology, Political Science, and Journalism constituting the relevant disciplinary backgrounds. It appears that the department thrives in its interdisciplinarity. In addition, the faculty's academic credentials at the Department of Social and Political Science are excellent, evidenced through extraordinary publication records. This is a most commendable group of scholars, with relevant teaching experience.

There is good use of the faculty plans and faculty capabilities are in accord with the ESGs.

The potential for synergies with broader society and policymakers are significant and the Department of Social and Political Science is capable of achieving these broader synergies. The faculty are engaged with extensive academic

and policy networks. These networks can be utilized to facilitate opportunities for student internships. Such internships will also help the MA students find jobs after they complete their studies.

The faculty possess the resources, backgrounds, and abilities to create a well-functioning international programme. Their experience with the Cyprus Summer School brings some experience with international students which they can build on to develop the programme. The scholars themselves have extensive international experience that they may draw upon.

The MA dissertation / thesis is unusually innovative. The notion of the visual and written media should serve to engage students. Indeed, this is the Department's experience already. It was related to us that students dedicate far more energy and time into their visual thesis than is normally allocated to a traditional written thesis. This feature should be used extensively to market the programme. It will serve as an attraction.

An advantage of having an MA programme on Peace, Conflict and Democracy in Cyprus is that the students can experience the nature of a conflictive society. Site visits will allow the students to directly experience and interact with those directly affected by the conflict. The programme thus offers a unique educational 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.

Some of the core strengths of the programme - its interdisciplinary focus and international character - also pose potential challenges that the department should give due attention to. For example, in designing the programme, it is important to ensure that the core courses of the programme are designed to fill knowledge gaps that are due to the students' prior education (general approach to education, disciplinary background and experience). In addition, the language of instruction - English - will be a second language for many students.

In order to ensure that students are well equipped to complete the MA dissertation, the methods training could be further developed. If feasible within current staffing, a second methods course with a choice of either a qualitative or quantitative orientation would be advantageous and helpful for the MA students writing their theses. In addition, in order to ensure proper support for completing the Master theses and optimize the learning experience, the department is advised to consider ways of introducing regular student peer review and a seminar series/workshops on the craft of research.

In order to ensure that all three themes of the MA are covered in the programme, a more explicit focus on democracy and democratization could also be taken. The focus of courses is, at least nominally, primarily on peace and conflict and less on democracy. Limited staff size, however, limits the course options.

A greater emphasis on ethics is also warranted given the challenges involved in the study of peace and conflict, and in researching conflict-affected societies. Rather than being seen as a separate topic covered in only a few courses, it could be considered an integrated theme of the programme as a whole.

The University of Cyprus is a relatively young institution that has grown considerably. This quick growth has created some stress on the faculty, which has been addressed with flexible hiring of temporary faculty. The Faculty of the

Department of Social and Political Science are a small yet effective and talented department that could be overworked. In the interest of the department, some central administrative support for the internationalization of the programme is recommended.

Some administrative procedures should be standardized. International recruitment is commendable but it does require some planning to reduce the costs of running such a programme.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

2.2 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

2.3 Practical training

2.4 Student assessment

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*

- *Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings

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

The process of teaching and learning are in compliance with the highest of standards. The faculty are highly engaged with the students and the learning process. Faculty have considerable autonomy and flexibility to develop their courses and the manner in which they teach. The teaching techniques employed are student-centred and innovative. Examples of this innovativeness is evident for example in student site visits. One of the advantages of being on the divided island of Cyprus is that issues of peace, conflict, and democracy can be studied in person with immediacy.

The programme offers a selection of practically-oriented activities, including site visits and an optional student internship programme.

Student assessment is a mix of traditional forms of assessment and more innovative forms of assessment. The MA thesis can take a variety of forms.

The Department takes stringent measures to ensure the integrity of the examinations. Student evaluations are carried out by the course lecturer. In addition to communicating electronically with students, all teaching personnel hold mandatory office hours (at least 2 hours per week) that are announced to students and to the Department Secretariat at the beginning of each semester. Blackboard plays a significant role in instruction, serving to record lectures and facilitate communication.

Strengths

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

The design and sequencing of courses is highly commendable. The plan takes advantage of the multidisciplinary nature of the faculty and the course options. The programme places good attention on practical training. The site visits and student internships fit well with practical training and employability skills. The internship programme allows for both policy- and research-oriented placements and therefore offers the opportunity for the development of a broad range of skills.

The varied assessment techniques offer an exciting and innovative approach to MA education, moving away from the purely written traditional MA thesis.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

The Department is aware of the need to provide an education that can result in a job when they finish with an MA. A focus on public policy featuring the work of NGOs and international organizations with regard to disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation (DDR), negotiations, peacekeeping, or related subjects, could be further developed. Not all MA students are suited for doctoral studies. The MA programme should be clear in its focus in providing clear qualifications making the graduates attractive hires.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*
- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The University of Cyprus is a public university and is able to hire academic staff within the respective funding model. The Department of Social and Political Sciences has 19 staff members across the disciplines of Sociology, Political Science and Journalism. All staff members hold PhD degrees and are research-active. Where PhD students teach as part of their scholarship commitments, they are supervised by an academic staff member. Occasionally, specialists are hired for specific and limited teaching purposes. The average teaching workload follows a 2+2 model, where staff members teach two modules per academic semester. Student evaluation of modules is common practice.

The way in which the new MA in Peace, Conflict and Democracy is proposed foresees most of the teaching to be completed by the department's academic staff members. There are provisions to ensure continuity in a situation in which a staff member is on leave. The module "Special topics in Peace and Conflict Studies" is the only module which

will not be convened by one of the department's academic staff and, it is proposed, will be hosted by a visiting academic external to the institution.

Strengths

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

The academic staff teaching on the programme represent a team of highly qualified and internationally known academics. Their enthusiasm for the launch of the new programme is remarkable. During our site visit, it became clear that the new MA is an opportunity for the department to organically build on the research expertise of their staff on the one hand, and bring those together in a collaborative, interdisciplinary way on the other hand. The interdisciplinary setup of the department lends itself to such an endeavour in terms of providing the structures within which collaborative teaching can take place in ideal conditions. It is likely that the collaborative pedagogic work will also lead to an increase in collaborative research.

The proposed MA clearly builds on the research expertise and strengths of the academic staff members, who have all published high-quality material on the content of their modules, respectively. The evaluation committee felt particularly positive about a number of examples of research-led teaching provided by the teaching team, including existing expertise in providing local site visits, hosting an international summer school, or the innovation introduced by the possibility of writing a "visual dissertation", an endeavour that academic staff have engaged with both in their teaching and research practice. Additionally, the department houses considerable in-depth expertise on the conflict in Cyprus and elsewhere, which is likely to serve as a major incentive for prospective applicants.

The evaluation committee also noted the extremely positive comments from current and past students about the teaching staff, who they described as 'exceptional', 'famous' and 'great'. This praise referred to both their academic credentials and their willingness to support students. The academic advisor system appears to be a suitable system to ensure such positive interactions between staff and students.

On an institutional level, we appreciate the availability of start-up funding for new colleagues to support their integration into the wider higher education landscape of Cyprus as well as the possibility to obtain internal research funding. Such initiatives are likely to not only contribute to research, but also to the quality of research-led teaching in the longer run.

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 areas of improvement and recommendations largely concern matters beyond the control of individual staff members of the Department of Social and Political Sciences. We note the ways in which resource limitations have the potential to impact upon the quality of teaching. We understand that the department has 19 staff currently, with 26 needed, ideally, to be able to run all programmes smoothly. This also has to be seen in the light of the additional administrative burden that a new Master's programme may bring to the table. Given that one of the central aims of the new programme is to further internationalise the student body, more demand on staff time is to be expected. This includes the support that is needed to ensure a smooth transition of overseas students into a new learning context as well as the potential demand for increased levels of pastoral support. We therefore recommend that the

staffing be reviewed to ensure a health staff-student ratio. This may also need to include additional administrative staffing. In the longer run, as the possibility of new hirings becomes realistic, we would encourage the department to think strategically about how the available staff expertise (both thematically and geographically) can continue to align with the internationalisation agenda, in terms of expanding the available expertise in this light.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
3	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

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

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

4.2 Student progression

Standards

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

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
 - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*

- o *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

Admission: The student admission requirements for the programme of study are based on specific regulations and suitable criteria that are in line with local and international practices. Due to the programme's interdisciplinary nature, applicant's with a background in the Social Sciences, Arts, Humanities or related fields will be considered and there is also a procedure by which applicants with relevant professional experience can be admitted to the programme.

Progression: This programme has established some formal procedures for ensuring progression of students in the programme. For example, academic advisors will be appointed to advise students but also to monitor their progress. Students who have failed more than half of their course work are required to meet their advisor in order to enrol for

the next semester. Based on the interviews, it was clear that additional procedures are in place for the department's other educational programs, which will also apply to this MA.

Recognition: The department will apply the general regulations of the University for recognition of credits from students' prior education and during the programme at other institutions, in addition to department-specific procedures where recognition and transfer of credits will be assessed based on the course content.

Certification: The degree that will be awarded is a Master of Arts in Peace, Conflict & Democracy (1,5 years/90 ECTS). The level, scope of credits and learning outcomes are in line with national and European standards for a Master's programme.

Strengths

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

Jointly, the department's academic staff has a diverse profile and should be capable of assessing candidates' educational backgrounds and their fit with the programme, as well as manage issues related to the recognition and transfer of course credits from courses taken at other institutions.

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.

Admission: Pursuant to the ambition to attract a diverse and international student group, the department should invest efforts in the procedures to evaluate international applicants and ensure that there is consistency in the evaluation of students from different countries and from different educational systems. For example, the conversion of grades between different systems is not always a straightforward task.

The department should also consider how proficiency of English is demonstrated by the applicants. The program application mentions IELTS scores, but to enable applications from across the globe, alternative proficiency tests could also be considered (e.g. TOEFL) to ensure that access to the test system is not hindrance in the application process.

Progression: The department can devote additional efforts to the procedures that ensure the students' progression in the programme and that requirements for progression within the programme are clearly communicated to the students. For example, to ensure that students in the programme have adequate skills to research and write the Master's dissertation, it is advisable that students are only assigned a dissertation supervisor after completion of the compulsory courses (including the methods course). In addition, the department emphasises their monitoring of the students' progress in the final stages of the programme, when students write their Master's dissertation. This challenge of following progress during dissertation work is another reason why it would be useful to have a more established structure around the dissertation – both for students to have more interaction with other students and the faculty beyond their supervisor, and also to provide an incentive for them to stay at the university throughout the duration of the writing-up process.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4	udent admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	udent recognition	Compliant
4.4	udent certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

- 5.1 **Teaching and Learning resources**
- 5.2 **Physical resources**
- 5.3 **Human support resources**
- 5.4 **Student support**

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

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 University has a suitable infrastructure for teaching, comprising a high-quality library, campus accommodation and teaching spaces.

Student support mechanisms are provided both at the Department level and centrally through the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service. At the Department level, the University of Cyprus has adopted a mechanism of providing an academic advisor to each student. As for student support at the University level, there are services offered by both the Social Support Office and the Psychological Support Centre.

The department has a team of administrative support staff. At this time, the department runs three undergraduate and three postgraduate programmes.

Strengths

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

A central strength of the university is the infrastructure. The campus, libraries, and study facilities are attractive and facilitate an excellent learning atmosphere. The library is excellent and was praised as world-class by the staff and students we spoke to. All students found the library to be a great asset of the university. Another thing to be praised are the efforts of the library in digitizing books. This has helped the students to have access to more learning resources. Another very good practice is the training seminars for accessing the electronic resources during the Covid-19 period, which is likely to be relevant into the future.

The services of both the Social Support Office and the Psychological Support Centre are responsive to student needs. Students are well aware of these services. This is highly commendable.

The Department's administrative staff are efficient and effective.

Overall, the infrastructure and administrative support are excellent.

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 Committee finds that there may be a need to clarify the role of the academic advisor to all the students.

Increasing the number of the administrative staff is likely to improve the support structures available both to academics and students.

We also recommend exploring options of expanding on the already existing scholarship opportunities to be able to attract a diverse pool of students from different regions of the world.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
5	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

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

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*

- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
 - *the stages of completion*
 - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
 - *the examinations*
 - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
 - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

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

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
 - *regular meetings*
 - *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
 - *support for writing research papers*
 - *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?
- Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?
- 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 Selection criteria and requirements	N/A
6.2 Proposal and dissertation	N/A
6.3 Supervision and committees	N/A

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 MA programme in Peace, Conflict, and Democracy exhibits tremendous potential. The Department of Social and Political Science is well suited to implement the plan and fulfill the goals of internationalisation. The MA programme builds nicely on the Department’s research strengths and interdisciplinary nature.

The new MA programme is likely to have positive spill-overs. For example, the new international MA programme is likely to lead to internationalised PhD recruitment, which will only strengthen the PhD programme.

We consider the Department of Social and Political Science to be capable of implementing our recommendations. They possess considerable teaching expertise and are extremely well-published; indeed, they constitute an impressive group of scholars. They are a methodologically diverse team who seem to get along well. They also exhibit a very impressive, widely diverse disciplinary focus. All forms of scholarship are respected and valued. These are qualities that serve to significantly enhance the value of the department to the MA programme in Peace, Conflict, and Democracy.

We have no major concerns about the MA programme proposed. Our suggestions should be regarded as constructive recommendations that we think may help the MA programme.

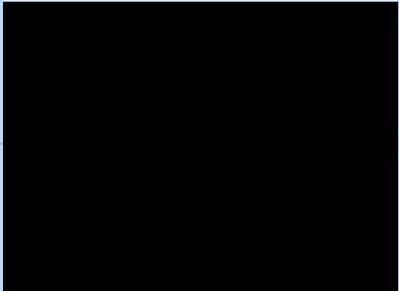
The university central administration could help ensure the success of the MA programme. First, they could support the increase in the size of the faculty in the Department of Social and Political Science. A larger staff will increase flexibility and the ability to accommodate student needs regarding teaching. Second, the central administration could support the department administration.

We strongly support the establishment of a new international MA programme in Peace, Conflict, and Democracy. We recommend the following next steps: The department needs to develop a coherent marketing strategy to draw in a good mix of students with talent and diverse backgrounds. They also need to develop a clear set of criteria for selecting the best international students. We also encourage them to build up the relevant support structures to help facilitate the development of the new international MA programme in Peace, Conflict, and Democracy.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Scott Gates	
Kristine Höglund	



Stefanie Kappler	
Pantelis Maki	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: May 3, 2021