

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: Date.

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

**In Greek:**

Γλώσσα, Γραμματισμός και Εκπαίδευση [6-16  
ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 240 ECTS, Διδακτορικό (PhD)]

**In English:**

Language, Literacy and Education [6-16 academic  
semesters, 240 ECTS, Doctorate (PhD)]

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek and/or English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].



## A. Introduction

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

**The External Evaluation Committee visited the Main Campus of the University of Cyprus on 27 October, 9:00-17:00**

**A series of meetings was conducted throughout the day (October 27 2025) with key staff, students, external stakeholders and administrative staff involved with the programme and the wider Department, faculty and Institution including the Head of Department, the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs who all made presentations on relevant aspects of the University, Faculty and Department connected with the programme under review.**

**The Committee was given ample opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on aspects of the documentation provided as well as discuss other parts of the programme and obtain relevant information from the participants**

**The Committee was also given a tour of the library facilities.**

**The full schedule is appended to the report.**

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>Cristiane Dalton-Puffer</b>	Professor of Linguistics and English Language Education	University of Vienna, Austria
<b>Helen Kelly-Holmes</b>	Professor of Applied Languages and Sociolinguistics Position	University of Limerick, Ireland
<b>Athena Theodotou</b>	Student Member	Open University of Cyprus
<b>George Tsoulas</b> Name	Professor of Linguistics Position	University of York, UK
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

## C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

### Findings

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

### Strengths

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

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

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

### **Sub-areas**

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

### **1.1 Policy for quality assurance**

#### Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
  - *is a part of the strategic management of the program.*
  - *focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study program.*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*
    - *is developed with input from industry leaders and other stakeholders (i.e. industry leaders, professional bodies/associations, social partners, NGO's, governmental agencies) to align with professional standards.*
    - *integrates employer surveys to adapt to evolving workplace demands.*
    - *regularly utilizes alumni feedback for long-term effectiveness assessment.*
    - *is published and implemented by all stakeholders.*

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

#### Standards

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

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

### 1.3 Public information

#### Standards

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

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

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

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

## 1.4 Information management

### Standards

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

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

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

## Findings

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

### Quality Assurance Policy

The University of Cyprus has a QA policy and has established a new office for the purposes of maintaining quality standards. Although the site contains information about the QA policy, it was somewhat unclear where the actual, updated documentation was to be found.

The PhD in Language, Literacy, and Education is a research-intensive doctoral programme offered by the Department of Education at the University of Cyprus. Currently operating with accreditation until Spring Semester 2025-26, the programme provides in-depth theoretical and empirical foundation in language arts, literacy theory and pedagogy, and applied linguistics including sociolinguistics, targeting educators and professionals.

The programme requires 240 ECTS over 6-16 semesters, combining coursework (60 ECTS, with exemptions for relevant Master's holders), comprehensive examination, proposal presentation, and dissertation defense. Instruction is offered in Greek and/or English. Learning outcomes align with the European Qualifications Framework, emphasizing theoretical knowledge, critical analysis, research methodology expertise, and practical application to language policy and literacy education.

Admission requires a Master's degree in Education, Philology/Linguistics, or related fields, with rigorous selection based on academic quality, research potential, CV review, recommendation letters, English proficiency, and oral interview. The programme is led by Associate Professor Elena Ioannidou with faculty demonstrating strong research credentials and international publications.

Assessment incorporates comprehensive examination (semesters 3-7), proposal defense before a three-member committee, and dissertation defense before a five-member committee including external members. Quality assurance aligns with CYQAA and ESG 2015 standards, utilizing the PDCA cycle with course evaluations, student surveys, and active stakeholder participation.

## Strengths

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

1. Clear Academic Identity: Well-defined focus on sociocultural and linguistic approaches distinguishes the programme while addressing contemporary research needs.
2. Comprehensive Structure: Multiple assessment checkpoints (comprehensive exam, proposal, dissertation) ensure systematic progression and quality control.
3. Flexible Delivery: The 6-16 semester timeframe and bilingual instruction accommodate diverse student needs while exemptions recognize prior learning.

4. Aligned Learning Outcomes: Intended outcomes are specific, measurable, and directly aligned with EQF doctoral-level descriptors.

5. Strong Research Culture: Active faculty research portfolios and international publications create an authentic doctoral research environment.

6. Robust Quality Assurance: Systematic QA framework with external committee participation ensures objective evaluation and continuous improvement. (the general recommendation concerning the QA policy documents notwithstanding)

### 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.*

- ECTS Consistency: Documentation shows inconsistency between 240 and 273 ECTS. Recommendation: Clarify and standardize ECTS requirements across all programme documents.
- Examination Guidelines: Limited detail on comprehensive examination format and preparation. Recommendation: Publish detailed guidelines specifying format, scope, criteria, and retake policies.
- Progression Pathways: Timeline between milestones requires clearer articulation. Recommendation: Develop visual timeline showing typical progression through key milestones and decision points.
- Research Methods: Specific training opportunities need clearer specification. Recommendation: Detail research methods courses and workshops available within the programme.
- Supervision Framework: Limited documentation on supervisor allocation and expectations. Recommendation: Publish supervision guidelines including selection procedures, meeting frequency, and issue resolution mechanisms.

**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



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



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

### Sub-areas

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

**2.2 Practical training**

**2.3 Student assessment**

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

#### Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*
- *Detailed schedules in course materials are included, explicitly stating the expected hours for lectures, self-study, and group projects, ensuring transparency in time allocation.*
- *A system is integrated where each learning activity is assigned a weight proportional to its importance and time requirement, aiding in balanced curriculum design.*

#### Findings

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

The PhD in Language, Literacy, and Education is a research-intensive doctoral programme centered on student autonomy and independent inquiry, demonstrating a commitment to student-centered learning.

## 2.1 Pedagogical Approach and Assessment

The programme employs diverse assessment methods to evaluate doctoral-level competencies, including written and oral examinations, case studies, quizzes, and student presentations. It also integrates experiential learning through organized interventions connected with course topics in out-of-class contexts (e.g., museums). Assessment is balanced, requiring instructors to use at least two evaluation methods, with the final examination not exceeding 60% of the final grade.

The doctoral assessment framework features three major milestones:

1. A comprehensive examination (oral or written) conducted between the third and seventh semester.
2. Presentation of a dissertation proposal to a three-member committee (students are given two opportunities).
3. Defense of the doctoral dissertation before a five-member examination committee.

## Student Support and Quality Assurance

Support is robust at both departmental and institutional levels. Departmental support includes the Academic Advisor system to monitor academic progress, weekly office hours, and the electronic BannerWeb system for feedback and materials.

Institutional support is comprehensive, covering administrative, health, social, and psychological challenges:

- The Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service addresses general support needs.
- The Social Support Office assists students with disabilities, health problems, or financial difficulties, ensuring appropriate accommodations.
- The University Mental Health Center offers free psychological support, counseling, and cognitive/diagnostic evaluation services, including those for learning difficulties.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) supports academic staff in developing student-centered pedagogy through seminars, training, and course design assistance. The CTL is key to quality assurance, implementing the Quality Assurance in Teaching Policy, administering the Teaching Excellence Award, and conducting systematic student course and instructor evaluations each semester.

## Learning Resources and Infrastructure

Learning resources are substantial. The Stelios Ioannou Learning Resource Centre provides over 900 study spaces (including a 24/7 reading room). The Library's collections are extensive, offering approximately 700,000 electronic books, 400,000 printed books, access to 200 scientific databases, and 30,000 e-journal titles. The Department of Education also operates the Loulla and Leto Papachristophorou Pedagogical Lab to specifically support experiential and inquiry-based learning.

Teaching infrastructure is modern, comprising 106 teaching rooms equipped with state-of-the-art audiovisual and teleconferencing systems. The Career Center provides extensive professional development support, including career counseling, CV/skills workshops, networking opportunities, and access to an online job board with over 1,000 employment and internship opportunities.

## 2.2 Practical Training

Training is offered in a variety of research methods, with a focus on qualitative methods, which students take as one of their core courses. Many examples of state-of-the-art and innovative methods are included in the research training course (e.g. multi-modal research methods, participatory methods etc.). Given that many students are teachers, the focus on practitioner-led / teacher-as-researcher in many of the courses and dissertations is to be welcomed. In addition, students can take an optional methods course which focuses on quantitative methods. The core status of the research methods course reflects the importance of this training to the programme. Stakeholders and students spoke highly of the impact of the research training. For example, stakeholders commented on the commendable way in which graduates of the programme can 'bridge policy and practice' and that they bring a 'refreshing view of literacy' to the classroom and other areas of life and work, and that their research training gives them an innate curiosity which they bring to their work. Students praised the constant linking of theory and practice in their modules and training and were appreciative of opportunities to learn outside of the lecture hall setting in real life situations. Course descriptions clearly describe components and expected hours which equate to relevant ECTS for the particular course.

In addition, PhD specific training is organised for students, primarily by academic staff on the programme rather than by the Graduate School. For example, training on research ethics. Training for PhD research is clearly rigorous given the steps involved in the process (taught modules, comprehensive exam, proposal defence, viva defence). The comprehensive exam process clearly enables students to demonstrate their ability to synthesize a range of literature, which is highly valuable, however the method by which this is assessed might be reconsidered.

## 2.3 Student assessment

In relation to the taught components of the programme, course outlines make clear the nature (e.g. time, length) and weighting of assessments. Examples of a range of assessments showcased how students can demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes and also how they can tailor the assessment to their particular strengths, interests and context. Courses have a range of assessments which test both acquisition and understanding of core concepts and the ability to apply these to real world language situations. All necessary procedures for marking, moderation, etc. appear to be in order for the process to be fair and transparent are in place.

In discussions with teaching staff and students, a number of examples of the linking of teaching and assessment to the objectives and learning outcomes were presented. In relation to responding to student feedback, one example illustrated how the instructor had altered how they gave group feedback (to incorporate an in-person meeting with

the group) in response to student requests for more feedback. Many examples of the development of transferrable skills were shown in the documentation and in particular in the presentations and discussions with staff, students, and stakeholders. One stakeholder commented on how graduates of the programme ‘bring an analytical and intellectual capacity which helps us to strengthen the education system’ in Cyprus.

In relation to the Comprehensive Examination, which is required in order to progress to developing a PhD proposal, there was consensus among both students and staff that this was a valuable process in itself and contributed to the rigorous nature of the training; however the method by which it is assessed could be revised. Examples from other institutions cited included take away papers or the completion of a research paper.

The process for examining the PhD itself was not clear to the evaluation panel. It was described satisfactorily by the staff in meetings and students did not raise any issues about this, but, for the purposes of documentation, it would be good to, outline this clearly (e.g. with a diagram) and to ensure that the role of external examiner(s) is highlighted.

The PhD does not have a maximum word count.

### Strengths

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

This is a highly rigorous programme. By the time students come to complete and defend their thesis, they have been tested many times in high stakes exams.

The topics of the theses that were shown to the panel reflect highly innovative research which clearly links to the outcomes of the programmes.

**Diverse Assessment Methods:** The requirement for multiple assessment methods ensures comprehensive evaluation of student learning while reducing over-reliance on single assessment approaches. The 60% cap on final examinations encourages formative assessment and continuous learning.

**Experiential Learning Opportunities:** The incorporation of organized interventions in out-of-class contexts demonstrates commitment to authentic learning experiences connecting theory with practice in real-world settings.

### 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.*

Consider revising the format of the Comprehensive Examination, based on reviewing examples of practice elsewhere, if this is permissible within institutional regulations.

Consider introducing a maximum word count – even as a guideline – for PhD theses on the programme.

Consider developing a clearer description / infographic of the PhD examination process that makes clear to those outside the institution how this takes place and what the role of external examiners is.

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

- 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.*

#### Findings PhD

##### 3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

- The Department employs 23 academics of different specialisations; ten of them are at the rank of full Professor, eleven at the rank of Associate Professor, and two at the rank of Lecturer. The core staff of the

programme under evaluation are two Associate Professors. We were not able to discuss exact recruitment procedures, but all staff have completed their PhDs and partly also held post-doc positions at universities outside Cyprus (mainly UK/US). Their familiarity with other academic traditions contributes to the teaching and supervision culture of the department and the programme. It was clear from the discussion with staff members and the HOD that teaching holds a high priority in the department.

- In terms of teaching skills development opportunities some are offered by the University's CTL. In the discussion, staff showed a proactive attitude towards integrating new challenges (AI) into their teaching activities. Additionally, staff are attending conferences and collaborating internationally in research and embed research into their teaching.
- Staff regularly receive the results of the course evaluations run by CTL.
- The annual personal research funds of up to € 6,000 (based on merit, like publications), are partly spent by staff on inviting international colleagues to complement local expertise; indirectly, this also serves the purpose of staff development.

### 3.2 Teaching staff number and status

The core staff of the PhD programme are the programme coordinators Ioannidou and Kontovourki. Table 1 presents the current staff of the PhD programme with their respective specialisations as presented in the application, all of them extensive supervision experience.

Table 1 PhD programme teaching staff

Staff member	Rank	Discipline
<i>Elena Ioannidou</i>	<i>Assoc.Prof.</i>	<i>Sociolinguistics and language arts education</i>
<i>Stavroula Kontovourki</i>	<i>Assoc.Prof.</i>	<i>Literacy and language arts education</i>
Leonida Kyriakides	Professor	Educational Research and Evaluation

In order to reflect the staff who PhD students have access to as teachers of elective courses (especially in research methods) but also as informal co-supervisors for specific questions concerning their doctoral research topics, we here reproduce the table of staff involved in the MA programme.

Table 2 MA programme teaching staff

Staff member	Rank	Discipline
<i>Elena Ioannidou</i>	<i>Assoc.Prof.</i>	<i>Sociolinguistics and language arts education</i>
<i>Stavroula Kontovourki</i>	<i>Assoc.Prof.</i>	<i>Literacy and language arts education</i>
Eleni Loizou	Professor	Early Childhood Education
Charoula Angeli-Valandides	Professor	Educational Technology
Zelia Gregoriou	Assoc.Prof	Philosophy of Education
Stavroula Philippou	Assoc.Prof.	Curriculum and Teaching
Simoni Symeonidou	Assoc.Prof	Inclusive Education & Disability Studies
Miranda Christou	Assoc.Prof	Education, collective memory and history

Charalambos Charalambous	Assoc.Prof.	Educational evaluation and assessment
Panayiotis Antoniou	Assist.Prof.	Research methods
Theoni Neokleus	STS	Language acquisition, bilingualism and literacy

### 3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

- A key strength of the programme is both coordinators' passion to socialize their PhD students into a theoretically saturated, critical, and socially responsive professional understanding of themselves as researchers. This was also pointed out emphatically by the students, who highly appreciate the experience of being supervised by research-active experts, who can support them across a broad range of necessary research skills, professional academic contexts and genres like conference presentations etc.
- Research activities of staff in the core areas of the programme are extensive, publishing and presenting in international fora, mainly in English. Research activities also involve extensive reviewing for high-ranking journals, serving on editorial boards and regular conference organization.
- The appreciated that staff underscored the importance of also publishing in Greek in order project more directly into the local context, the Literacy and Language Arts Conference being another instance of staff's efforts to link international research expertise with the Cypriot context.
- The programme is exemplary in its consistent integration of education and research, both in terms of the course leaders' research feeding into coursework and in terms of students' research activities reaching out into local educational and non-educational contexts.

#### Strengths

Staff provide excellent role models for students to become engaged in rigorous, critical and socially responsible research practice.

Supervising faculty possess deep contextual knowledge of the students' research contexts enabling them to advise them sensitively.

Supervising faculty are familiar with the Department's MA graduates (who so far represent the PhD's student intake) enabling them to tailor course content, recommendations for research training to different student needs.

The programme leaders' collegial relations (and collaboration in the MA programme) with the other academics of the department allow for short-route access to additional expertise if necessary for an individual student's project

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The course team in conjunction with HoD and faculty leadership might want to think about a strategy to ensure sustainability of the programme in case one of the two coordinators is not available or if the programme were to grow.

A regular and on-demand offer of short-term workshops by external academics in order to complement local expertise, especially in research approaches such as Action Research or DesignBasedResearch



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



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

- 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 (see section 7.1)**

##### **4.2 Student progression**

Student progression is regulated by the University of Cyprus and is effectively monitored, with appropriate interventions when needed. During the evaluation process, students expressed strong appreciation and complete satisfaction with the academic support provided, particularly highlighting the dedication of the two programme coordinators and other staff members involved in their studies.

##### **4.3 Student recognition**

Students' master's degrees are recognized in accordance with the guidelines and procedures of the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS). The programme also ensures recognition of both formal and informal learning through its tailored admission criteria, which consider varied academic backgrounds in literacy, language, and education.

##### **4.4 Student certification**

Student certification is regulated by the University of Cyprus and applies uniformly across all faculties, departments, and academic programmes. Graduates receive official documentation detailing the qualification awarded, including the learning outcomes achieved, the academic context, and comprehensive information about the level, content, and status of their completed studies.

*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 programme follows the standards set by the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. Doctoral-level research is properly supervised, and, as expected, the number of enrolled students remains small.

### **Strengths**

1. Admission procedures are well-structured and appropriately implemented.
2. Prospective students receive clear and comprehensive information regarding admission requirements and processes.
3. Students report high levels of satisfaction with the support provided by programme staff.
4. Candidates' academic qualifications are duly recognized by the Cyprus NARIC authority.
5. Student certification is systematically organized and executed, with clear monitoring of doctoral progress throughout the programme.
6. Tuition fees are reasonably priced and not considered excessive, with flexible installment options available to ensure that students are not financially overburdened.

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### **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. English proficiency does not seem to be formally linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is advised that a minimum standard of B2 be formally established.

2. Expanding the use of technology and offering distance learning opportunities is recommended to enhance the programme’s attractiveness, particularly for prospective students with time constraints or those residing in distant locations.

3. Additionally, since some students have expressed challenges in meeting deadlines, the adoption of AI-based tools, especially those designed to summarize extensive academic materials, is advised to aid time management and boost learning efficiency.

**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**

- 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.*

#### **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.*

### **5.1 Teaching and learning resources**

The **geographical situation** of the Department of Education is a challenge to the smooth provision of teaching and learning resources and student access. Travel between teaching locations and staff offices is time-consuming. It was therefore encouraging to hear that the department is going to move to the main university campus in the foreseeable future.

Course readings and **materials** are provided via the **learning platform** Blackboard and are **easily accessible** to students online.

**Resources** truly reflect the twice dual aim of covering classic and novel approaches as well as the global and the local. The taught part of the PhD combines an **emphasis on academic reading** with an **engagement with real life and often local empirical data** which resonate with students' lived realities and which appear to be adjusted to the needs of individual student cohorts. Course materials show responsiveness to changes in the social context, e.g. migration to Cyprus and the impact of AI.

## 5.2 Physical resources

**1. Department Location** The panel observed that the Department of Education is situated at a considerable distance from the vibrant and expanding main campus. This separation was perceived by academic staff as a disadvantage. Although there are future plans to relocate the department to the central university area, the panel believes that the current location poses challenges for both faculty and students.

**2. Library and Group Study Facilities** On a positive note, the university offers a fully staffed library that operates 24/7, providing continuous access to resources. Additionally, there are designated rooms available for group study, each accommodating up to four students, which encourages collaborative learning.

**3. Technical Support** The panel also noted the presence of active technical support services, which play a valuable role in assisting both academic and operational needs across the university.

## 5.3 Human Support

The programme is supported by three departmental administrators with the course director also carrying quite a lot of the programme management responsibilities. At present, there is one administrator position unfilled, which has been filled on a temporary basis for some time. The departmental administrators carry out a very wide range of functions across all undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD programmes as well as looking after staff, research projects, scheduling etc. and also liaising with other units across the institution. The Faculty of Social Sciences and Education has introduced a new post to support the marketing of and recruitment for programmes such as this. A few cycles of recruitment will be needed to see if this is improving the process and supporting the academic staff.

The Graduate School plays a role in supporting the programme and research students in general, by providing the regulatory framework for higher degrees.

### **Student Support**

Academic staff are clearly the first port of call and a key resource for supporting students. In addition, students have a range of institutional supports of which they can avail. Students also gave examples of how they provide support to each other through social media groups etc. The students also have the opportunity to participate in international conferences and research projects.

For PhD students, the supervisor is of course the primary supporter. All students spoke warmly of the supportive relationships with their supervisor. Likewise, the dedication of supervisors in supporting their doctoral candidates was also clear. The level of support and mentoring is high, but probably only possible given the relatively small intake.

### *Strengths*

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

Full exploitation of learning platform for provision of learning materials.

In the taught part of the PhD, materials reflect intellectual history of the course topics but are also responsive to recent developments. Provision of data and small research tasks for experiential learning of different research approaches and their signature techniques.

A very dedicated team of academic and administrative staff within the Department ensures that students are supported.

A range of institutional services exist for students in need of support.

### *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.*

Prioritize the move of the Department of Education to the main campus to improve staff accessibility for students. Try to provide bookable desk space for PhD students who need quiet work away from family commitments.

Ensure that the departmental administrative vacancy is filled on a permanent basis to maintain the high-quality support to academic staff and students.

Were there pressure or desire to grow the programme, additional resources and/or a redesign of the intensity of the programme would be required.



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**

#### **6.1 Selection criteria and requirements**

#### **6.2 Proposal and dissertation**

#### **6.3 Supervision and committees**

### **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.*

#### **6.1 Selection criteria and requirements**

Specific criteria for admission are laid out. The admissions process is extensive, involving submissions by the student, references and interviews. There is competition for places, but due to the level of All of the requirements for obtaining the PhD degree are published.

#### **6.2 Proposal and dissertation**

Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and dissertation are provided. However, these could benefit from a maximum word count – even as a guideline, if this is not permitted by the institution. As previously mentioned in Section 3.3, both students and staff expressed concern about the nature of the assessment for the Comprehensive Examination and there was unanimous agreement among students that the format could be changed to something that would be more beneficial to their PhD development (e.g. research paper).

#### **6.3 Supervision and committees**

The composition of the PhD defence committee was not clear to the Panel in the documentation submitted, but this was clarified in the meetings with staff. While there is a lot of oversight and input from multiple faculty at the early stages (e.g. taught modules, comprehensive exam, proposal defence) which ensures the scientific quality of the thesis, following this there is no external oversight until the defence and the student works solely with the supervisor(s). In many institutions internationally, an annual review of progress takes place with other members of faculty involved in reviewing the student's work and this is perhaps something that could benefit students and supervisors.

Several dissertation titles showed clear links to the programme’s objectives, its unique multi-faceted focus on languages arts and literacy, and also innovative approaches linked to the latest thinking. Stakeholders spoke highly of graduates and the role they are playing in the education system in particular. Students spoke very positively about being able to participate in conferences and travel. A space for PhD students to interact could be useful, although many are part-time and work primarily at home.

### Strengths

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

A unique programme that combines a multidisciplinary approach to literacy and language arts

Highly rigorous and in-depth preparation for PhD completion

Very dedicated staff and experienced supervisors who are leading in their research fields

### 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.*

Consider introducing a maximum word count for the PhD thesis.

Consider introducing an annual review of PhD student progress in the years between the proposal defence and the doctoral defence

Make the composition of the PhD defence panel and process clear for stakeholders outside the institution (e.g. through an infographic)

Consider ways to foster a stronger community among PhD students, if there is a desire to do so (e.g. through provision of space).

**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	Compliant
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
6.3	Supervision and committees	Compliant

### **D. Conclusions and final remarks**

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

This is clearly a rigorous programme with high quality outcomes. It benefits from dedicated staff with strong international reputations and linkages. Students and stakeholders speak warmly and positively about the programme. The programme has potential to grow and attract international students, given the possibility to write a thesis in English, however in its current form, given the intensity of the programme, the resources in place, and the feel level, this does not seem possible. As the programme is delivered by a small group of staff who all enjoy strong relationships and to a small group of students who know each other and the staff well, there is quite a lot of implicit knowledge. Where the programme to grow, this would need to become more explicit (e.g. language requirements). The programme has a unique selling point of focusing on literacy and language arts in a multidisciplinary and novel way – the many excellent examples of student work, dissertations and activities as well as the testimonials of graduates and stakeholders all attest to this and could be used to position the programme in a more competitive way.



## E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Christianne Dalton-Puffer</b>	
<b>Helen Kelly-Holmes</b>	
<b>Athena Theodotou</b>	
<b>George Tsoulas</b>	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

**Date:** October 28 2025