Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 12/4/2024.

External Evaluation Report
(E-learning 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:

  Δημιουργική Μάθηση και Τέχνες στην Παιδική Ηλικία
  (3-8 εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό, Εξ αποστάσεως)

  In English:

  Creative Learning and the Arts in Childhood (3-8 semesters, 90 ECTS, Master of Arts, E- Learning)

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

- **Programme's status: New**

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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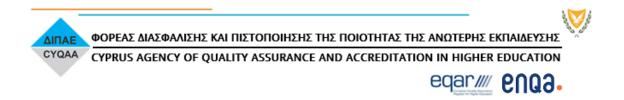
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A. Introduction

The onsite visit was very well organised. The members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) were warmly welcomed by excellent hosts. The documentation and presentations which were reviewed during the day-long meeting had been sent to the EEC earlier and this made it possible to have more time for in-depth discussions. The various meetings and activities for this onsite visit included:

(a) the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs who is the Chair of the internal QAC at the University;
(b) the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education and the Chair of the Department of Education;
(c) the proposed Programme Co-ordinator and other members of the teaching staff;
(d) Administrative staff;
(e) Students from programmes other than the new one under review;
(f) Staff from the Distance Learning unit;
(g) the Head of the Academic Development and Quality sector;
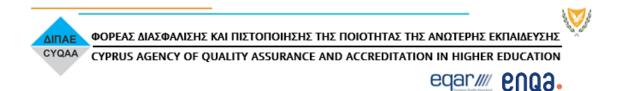(h) a visit to the UCY library.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Pamela Burnard	Professor (Chair)	University of Cambridge
Valerie Sollars	Professor (Member)	University of Malta
Arniika Kuusisto	Professor (Member)	University of Helsinki
Christothea Herodotou	Professor (Member)	The Open University UK
Maria Kramvi	Student (Member)	Open University of Cyprus

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)*
  - *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*
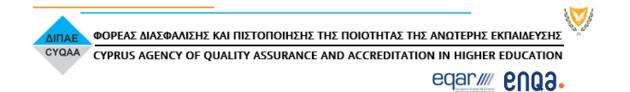
1.3 Public information

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*

> ○ *career paths of graduates*
>
> ● *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

Findings

From the onsite visit as well as the documentation which the EEC was given, the University of Cyprus (UCY) has a clear quality assurance policy which takes into consideration regular and ongoing monitoring of programmes of study with clear channels of feedback. Since this is a new programme, some aspects of the programme cannot be reported about. However, the conceptual principles underlying the programme are clearly focused on addressing the needs of mature students trying to combine studies with other commitments but who are keen to advance themselves professionally in order to be more prepared as active citizens in a democratic society. To this end, UCY is focused on students' well-being and progression and the University and Faculty administration and academic members of staff are all committed to ensuring that students' learning experiences are engaging and relevant.

Strengths

1.1 Standards

- As this course has not yet been offered, there is no formal status.
- The structures, regulations and processes at the university level are in place.
- Student representation is required on all boards and their feedback is acted upon.
- As part of the university policy, academic standards are in place (e.g., Turnitin, use of AI and ChatGPT)
- There is an equality and anti-discrimination policy in place (e.g., online support for student health and mental wellbeing – see page 35 Study Guide)
- There is involvement of external stakeholders (e.g., external supervision provision; collaboration with NGO's and industry research sites external to university)

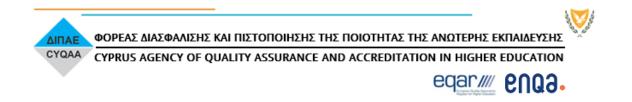### 1.2 Design, approval, ongoing monitoring and review

- The programme and course design are in line with institution strategy with explicit learning outcomes.
- The strength of this qualification is the innovative intersection of several disciplines (childhood studies, play and creative learning).
- There is a structure for collection of student feedback.

1.3 Public Information

- Not Applicable

1.4 Information Management

- Key performance indicators will be collected and utilised (see Page 20).
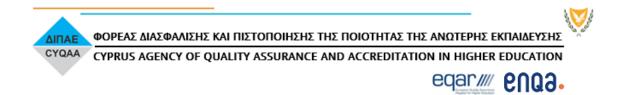- A policy for end-of-course evaluations, surveys etc is in place.

- The policy for students and staff provision, and analysis information and planning of follow-up activities is in place (generative staff planning and collaborations, reflections and management and evaluation development, p. 21).

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- There is evidence that conceptually the programme has taken into consideration planning for smooth student progression. However, we recommend that UCY carefully considers students who will be joining the course at different times, especially if there will be students from subsequent cohorts following the same courses and considering that they will be admitted from very different professional and academic backgrounds.
- We would like more transparency and more specific detailed information on how assessment and assignments correspond to the level of ECTS (see course descriptions - in the Study Guide and include a table that maps ECTS per module to the student workload, activity, on a weekly basis).

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partial Compliance
1.3	Public information	Not applicable
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**
> **2.5 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities**

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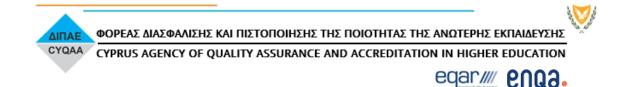
Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
    - *among students*
    - *between students and teaching staff*
    - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning 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 e-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.*
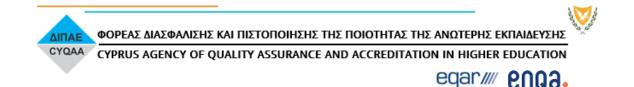
2.3 Student assessment

Standards

● *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
● *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 e-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.*

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

● *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
  o *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  o *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  o ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
  o *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  o *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  o *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*

> o *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
> o *Synopsis*
>
> ● *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

Findings

2.1 Process of Teaching and Learning and Student-centred Teaching Methodology

There is evidence of good planning for 5 teleconferences (via MS Teams) per course of 3 hours each which are optional for students to attend. Course material is hosted on Blackboard. However, other modes of learning delivery are absent such as the use of online forums for student interactions, online quizzes, online making games such as Minecraft, virtual museum tours, online simulations and a diverse use of applications such as Padlet.

There are plans for providing students with training, guidance and support focusing on the specificities of e-learning. There are appropriate procedures set for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning (p. 20). While we recognise that distance learning provides for flexibility, the specifics of when, where, how and for how long students will be engaged in collaborative learning, peer learning and co-construction are not stated in the study guide or the recorded video sample provided to the EEC. For students to take an active role in co-creating the e-learning process, and for co-constructing and developing supportive online interactive communities, detailed and clear guidance for completing interactive activities and exercises need to be stated in study guides and online.

Students are likely to come from diverse backgrounds and with different needs. Therefore, the EEC recommends an induction week (or a few days) which provides for thorough training and confidence with library use, online tools and the e-learning platform (p. 25) as well as networking with other students (through example activities). Also, engaging with material in English requiring a certain competence in academic reading and writing may be challenging for some students, despite them meeting the entry requirement for English language proficiency. Appropriate procedures for academic literacy, and development of critical skills require online specificities and involvement of the language centre for support.

2.2 Practical Training

The interconnectivity of practical and theoretical studies is crucial to manifest the intersection of play, creative learning and childhood studies. The example of making sounds and composing interactively with sounds produced by everyday objects given during the onsite visit, was impressive. How this translates into an online, interactive activity needs to be clearly articulated. There are also some good examples of problem-based learning, collaborative learning and inquiry-based learning planned for some of the study guides (see Distance Learning Manual p.10) enabling applications of theory to practice.

2.3 Student Assessment

Although the general structure of assessment is in place for each course, the details, operationalisation, weighting and assessment rubrics for each interactive activity and exercise are not defined. There needs to be a larger weighting for interactive weekly activities – at least 20% - as 10% is insufficient to cover evidence of creative learning, knowledge construction and collaboration. Assessment plans need to be mapped clearly so that students can see what is expected from them on a weekly basis but also a cumulative overview of e-learning progression.

2.4 Study Guides: Structure, Content, and Interactive Activities

The content of study guides is clustered around thematic blocks of 3 weeks. Interactive activities are requested at the end of each block. This would be challenging for online students as it makes it harder for them to plan their weekly workload and study time. Aligning with 'bite size' learning, the educational context should be broken down into focused pieces suitable for quick use and understanding. The EEC recommends that the educational content be organised around individual weeks, clearly stating interactive activities and exercises and offering clear instructions for student interaction, discussion and feedback. Online and distance learning require this level of detail.

The EEC has observed that the wording of learning outcomes is not measurable. These should be revised to be measurable and avoid repetition and use of ambiguous terms such as 'understand' or 'understanding'. At a masters level there needs to be use of verbs that point to more complex thinking skills such as critically evaluate, interpret, critique, infer, compare, explain, classify, analyse, problematise, identify, record (see page 71, 75, 76).

In order to critically evaluate and conduct rigorous research, the EEC acknowledges that both *Research Methods in Education* and *Creative Research Methods in Childhood* courses are essential (see page 65, List of Compulsory Courses and Elective Courses) and should be compulsory for all students. As the programme was presented in the application (p. 65 in the *Application for Evaluation - Accreditation Programme of Study*), choosing both courses was not possible for those students opting for the dissertation option. When the EEC mapped out Semester 1 and Semester 2 – for the first and second years - using the proposed list of courses: (a) with a dissertation and (b) without a dissertation (p. 65), they found that students who opt for a dissertation will never have the opportunity to do the 'Creative Research Methods in Childhood'.

We strongly recommend reordering the course sequence as follows:
Year 1 - Semester 1: *Play and Creativity* and *Mental Processes, Representations and Creative Learning*
Year 1 - Semester 2: *Research Methods in Education* and *Creative Research Methods*
Year 2 - Semester 1: Either *DISSERTATION* or *Visual Arts and Creative Learning in Early Years* and *Creative Musical Experiences in Childhood*

Such resequencing will enable all students to: (a) follow both research methods courses, (b) foreground the learning of relevant skills and knowledge needed to plan and conduct research with children. Furthermore, this would allow for theoretical and conceptual issues and debates to feature in the first year and the arts specific domains to feature in the second year of the programme.

The EEC wondered about the appropriateness of the course title *'Creative Research Methods in Childhood'*. Contemporary approaches encourage doing research "with" - rather than about - children. The EEC recommends a change of title to read: '*Participatory Methods with Children*', or '*Participatory Research Methods: Enabling Voices in Research*', '*Creative Research Methods with Children*'. These title suggestions are more socially and culturally situated, ethically appropriate, and encourage doing research with children not on children. Such changes will ensure the ethical valuing and acknowledgement of children as agentic. Similarly, the title and content of the course guide: '*Visual Art and Creative Learning in Early Years*' should be amended to consistently reflect the overall programme, its title, and specific focus on 'childhood' (not only early years).

Regarding the coherence across the programme, the learning objectives of each individual course should be mapped to the programme outcomes (see slide 19, Presentation, Long Distance Learning). This will make clear the balance between creative learning, play, childhood and arts. The EEC also strongly recommends including an explicit component reflecting multiliteracies in diverse contexts, including but not restricted to literature, poetry, lyrics,

rhymes, digital literacy, movement, social and emotional literacy, dance and drama. There is no course guide for the dissertation (see Appendix 2 Individual Course Guide).
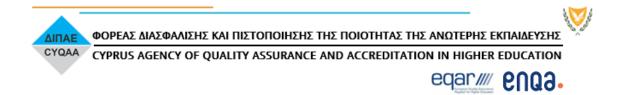
Strengths

- Good planning for 5 teleconferences per course of 3 hours each with course material hosted on Blackboard.
- There are plans for providing students with training, guidance and support focusing on the specificities of e-learning.
- There are some good examples of application of theory to practice.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Diverse modes of learning delivery need to be systematically added across all courses such as the use of online forums for student interactions, online making games such as Minecraft, virtual museum tours, online simulations and a diverse use of applications.
- Detailed and clear guidance for completing interactive activities and exercises needs to be stated in study guides and online.
- An induction week (or a few days) should be organised to provide students with thorough training and confidence with library use, online tools and the e-learning platform, as well as networking with other students.
- There needs to be a larger assessment weighting for interactive weekly activities – at least 20%.
- The assessment plans need to be mapped clearly so that students can see what is expected from them on a weekly basis.
- The educational content needs to be organised around individual weeks, clearly stating interactive activities and exercises and offering clear instructions on how these should be completed and assessed.
- The wording of learning outcomes should align with the development of complex thinking skills.
- The course '*Creative Research Methods in Childhood*' should be compulsory for all students irrespective of the route they choose to follow.
- Some course titles should be revised (See above).
- A course guide for the dissertation should be added.
- An explicit component reflecting multiliteracies, including but not restricted to literature, poetry, lyrics, rhymes, digital literacy, movement, dance and drama should be added.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Partially compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Partially 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.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *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.*

  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.*

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.*

Findings

The EEC had a meeting with members of the teaching staff for one hour during the onsite visit. The ECC enjoyed a presentation from the Programme Coordinator who introduced us to the content of each course, its implementation, learning outcomes, content and assessment. The ECC was also introduced to the level of the programme according to the European Qualifications Framework. The teaching team was asked how they felt about teaching their specialisms on-line. The teaching team responded with integrity and commitment to specificities and challenges of e-learning along with the willingness to collaborate, teach differently as a condition of online and distance learning.

The strengths of the Teaching staff are many given the specialist expertise, experience and teaching-skills that will ensure quality and sustainability of the online teaching and e-learning. The Teaching staff are very experienced, committed and creative professionals each of whom is an experienced researcher, eager to engage innovatively in delivering the on-line course. The Teaching staff expressed confidence about doing things differently online. There was lively discussion concerning the connections and connection-making between mathematics and music, art and play, problem-solving, STEAM and playful learning. There were ideas shared for ways of expanding creative teaching repertoires practised collaboratively. Working collaboratively was acknowledged.

The idea of developing a 'digital quilt' as a repository for new practices and student learning, with a genuine commitment to creating new opportunities to teach creatively, was discussed. It was clear that UCY should consider new ways of enabling the sharing of good practice amongst staff online (webinars by external experts or making arrangements for regular 'pedagogical café', development of 'a digital quilt' for documenting). The use of new technologies was encouraged including the use (and multiplicity) of applications currently available that can easily be operationalised for online pedagogies (e.g., Brian Eno Bloom, Bloom 10 Words, Bjork's Biophilia, and Livecoding programmes Sonic Pi which is open source and appropriate for primary age children).

The EEC welcomes the plans to invite visiting staff to participate in teaching on the study programme. There are many recent articles in academic journals co-authored by collaborative teaching teams, developing new programmes and online tablet practices. The UCY Teaching staff are familiar with some of these studies and publications. The EEC applauds the teaching staff for their willingness to embark on this innovative and unique programme of study. The EEC strongly encourages collaborative engagement and action research on the development of the programme in the first years.
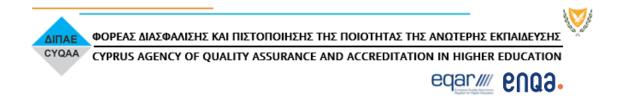
Strengths

- Institutional recruitment has clear standards.
- Clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.
- Teaching staff qualifications are more than adequate to achieve the objectives.
- Teaching staff are involved in conferences, research activity and the development of the teaching skills required for elearning.
- Technical support is in place.
- Active cooperation and support is in place.
- Permanent teaching staff is more than adequate to support the programme of study along with ancillary and visiting staff.
- Visiting staff does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.
- The teaching staff collaborate well in the fields of teaching and research.
- Scholarly activity is well linked between education and research.
- The teaching staff publications are broadly within the discipline.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Pedagogical and technological aspects of e-learning training needs to be explicit. They have training in place for pedagogical and technological e-learning which is mandatory. However, UCY should consider ways of enabling the sharing of good practice amongst staff online (webinars of external experts or 'pedagogical café').
- The use of new technologies is encouraged. However, we recommend that academic staff engage with new practices involving multiple applications that can easily be operationalised in creative teaching for creative learning with arts, play and childhood.
- There are plans to invite visiting staff to participate in teaching the study programme. The EEC strongly encourages invitations to involve scholars and, for instance, digital artists.
- Generally teaching staff's research and publications are related to the programme's courses. The EEC strongly encourages the teaching staff to engage collaboratively on a research project that focuses on this programme.When the programme is re-evaluated in the coming years, the EEC would expect to see research related to e-learning by the teaching staff.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

Student admission, processes and criteria
Student progression
Student recognition
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*
  - *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.*

Findings

During the onsite visit, the EEC had the chance to interview two PhD students, one graduate and current PhD student and three Master Students. The student interviews revealed a positive learning environment and a strong sense of belonging even after graduation. Three out of the six students are currently employed by UCY, while the rest were successfully recruited in the public and private sector. The impression was given that most of the graduates have successfully moved to the next step of their career. The students described a smooth journey, from admission towards graduation. Support and guidance were offered to them throughout their student journey by both administrative and academic staff. It is important to mention the close relationship they seemed to have formed with the academic staff and the rest of the UCY community, described by someone even as '*family'*.

Strengths

- Student satisfaction is one of the strengths of UCY.
- Necessary regulations and policies are in place to reassure the high standards of student experience.
- Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission, recognition and certification are in place.
- Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.
- Pre-defined and published regulations at the institution regarding student progressions are in place and coherent.
- Fair recognition of UCY qualifications, periods of study etc are all in place.

- Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- To effectively document and support student progress, teachers are encouraged to systematically use and act upon Blackboard Analytics, which should be enriched by other indicators such as number of forum comments, responses to quizzes.
- There needs to be a procedure in place detailing when teachers should monitor and act upon analytics, especially in order to identify when to take action for students at risk. This is particularly pertinent in a programme where students come from diverse academic and professional backgrounds.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	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)*
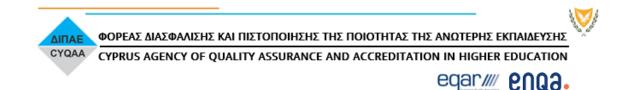
Sub-areas

Teaching and Learning resources
Physical resources
Human support resources
Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive*

activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.

- *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 e-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.*

Findings

Overall, both the application for external evaluation, the materials provided, and the onsite visit illustrate that UCY has, in principle, good practices and structures for learning resources and student support regarding the examined content areas, Teaching and Learning resources, Physical resources, Human support resources and Student support. Strong competences and solid institutional memory of the skilful and long-serving administrative and support staff is irreplaceable in supporting the teaching and learning across the department. Also, the present and continuous support from the faculty leadership towards the development of the programme has and continues to be of critical importance.

The programme which was presented to the EEC for its evaluation will run online and therefore some of the on-site resources for learning and student support do not directly apply to this programme of studies. However, there is a separate document *'Procedures Supporting E-learning 2024'* (in Greek) which provides details that support the teaching and learning process of online courses.

Strengths

5.1 Teaching and Learning Resources

- There is a distance learning unit in place consisting of a pedagogical unit, a technological unit, and an academic development and quality unit. This is equipped with a diverse set of professionals specific to e-learning.
- The physical on-site Labs for Arts and Early Learning will offer teaching staff functional venues for online teaching and for settings to do real-life or video-recorded sessions with students. The already established reciprocal collaboration between the teachers of the programme will support and enhance also the online implementation of teaching.

5.2 Physical Resources

- Physical resources are adequate to support the study programme. Students have access to a magnificent and well-resourced library, which is also to a great extent accessible to the students of this programme through online resources, such as databases, e-books and research literature.
- All resources are fit for purpose.

5.3 Human Support Resources

- During the induction week students should be informed about the services available to them.
- All resources are fit for purpose. The administration staff were super helpful. Access was exemplary given that there are no 'office hours' which often reduces access.
- In the Student E-learning Handbook there are very helpful resources and guidance. This is exemplary.

5.4 Student Support

- Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population
- Students are informed about the services available to them. This is impressive.
- Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching are taken into account when allocating support. The EEC was very impressed by the open-door policy, access to mental health support online.
- Student mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported. This is well in place in relation to the diverse background of students online.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Upon request, the EEC has received a copy of the useful document called *'Procedures Supporting E-learning 2024'* (in Greek) which presents the online course. This includes staff training, initial planning for programme,

technical training and design of courses on Blackboard. However, there should be in place a process for reviewing (a) the final courses designed on the platform and (b) the structure and content study guide. This will ensure consistency across online courses and ensure the requirements such as interactivity and collaboration, are met.

● Regarding the evaluation criteria of whether the resources are fit for purpose, the EEC would also like to see some more up-to-date research literature in the course literature. For instance, the 'Research Methods in Education' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison) in the research methods course has more recently had two further editions, where the 2018 edition is revised and significantly updated when it comes to for example Mixed Methods Research. While the more recent updates may not be available in Greek, it would be advisable to use at least chapters or sections of more updated references. The research methods and methodologies have seen a significant development during the recent years. Some of the recent publications which may be of interest and relate strongly across several courses include:

Bodén, L. (2024). In the middle of a standardized test: The emerging relations of young children in research. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *25*(1), 62-79. https://doi.org/10.1177/14639491221117217

Bodén, L. (2021): On, to, with, for, by: ethics and children in research, *Children's Geographies*, DOI: 10.1080/14733285.2021.1891405.

Johnson, R., Cantrell, K., Cutcliffe, K., Batorowicz, B., and McLean, T. (2023) Expanding creative communities in the visual arts: Using padlet to support student engagement and belonging in stressful contexts. *Art Education*, 76(4), 33-39.

Burke, K., Chapman, S., Chapman, S., Cook, P., Hotko, K., Luecke, Mortimer, A. (2024) (Re-)envisioning online arts education content delivery in initial teacher preparation through collective a/r/tographic inquiry. *International Journal of Education and the Arts* (in review).

Hickey-Moody, A., Knight, L., and Florence, E. (2021) C*hildhood, Citizenship and the Anthropocene*. Rowan & Littlefield. See Chapter 1 'Mapping key debates in childhood studies and posthumanism'.

Rousell, D. and Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles (A). 2020. Giving children and young people a 'voice'. *Children's Geographies,* 18(2), 191-208.

Tisdall, K., Davis, J.M., and Gallagher, M. (2008) *Researching With Children and Young People: Research Design, Methods and Analysis*. London: Routledge.

Burnard, P., and Loughrey, M. (2021) *Sculpting New Creativities in Primary Education. Unlocking Research.* London: Routledge.

Gearon, L. F., Benjamin, S., Itkonen, T., Kallioniemi, A., & Kuusisto, A. (2022). Religion and Worldviews in Early Childhood Education and Care: Eight Parameters for Ethical Research. In A. Kuusisto (Ed.), *The Routledge International Handbook of the Place of Religion in Early Childhood Education and Care* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003017783-16

Ek-karach Charoennit, Natcha Techaaphonchai, & Nayos Sartjinpong. (2023). Music Activities for Children from Birth to Three Years to Enhance Brain Development in Language and Communication in Thailand. *Kurdish Studies*, *11*(2), 2387–2400. Retrieved from https://kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/view/804
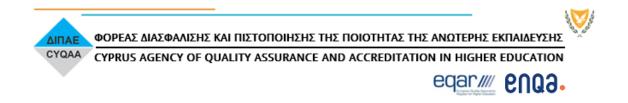
Kangas, J., Harju-Luukkainen, H., Brotherus, A., Gearon, L. F., & Kuusisto, A. (2022). Outlining play and playful learning in Finland and Brazil: A content analysis of early childhood education policy documents. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *23*(2), 153-165. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949120966104

Lee, Tiffany Shuang-Ching (2023). Designing art museum E-learning resources for children. Content analysis from education perspectives. Interactive Learning Environments, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2162549.

Palmer, T., Burnard, P. and Burke, D. (2024) Inviting a (Re-)Orientation to 'Musicking-as-Play'. *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education* (in press).

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

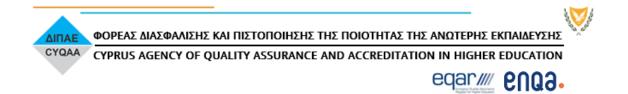| Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Partially compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC evaluated the program considering the documents provided before, during and after the visit, as well as the communication with staff and students during the on-site visit. This is one of the first programmes UCY is offering online and the EEC would like to stress the innovative yet challenging choice of teaching creativity, arts and childhood from a distance and online. The EEC found the staff to be well qualified and committed and open to taking up recommendations of how to improve the programme as discussed during the visit. Senior staff members were found to be willing to enable a successful e-learning implementation and support teaching staff (by allowing time and resources) to prepare the programme as needed.

Despite a set of strengths, the proposed programme could be further improved by addressing the following:

- There should be greater transparency and details of how ECTS correspond to studying and student workload (1.2).
- Reordering the set of courses to ensure the two research methods courses are compulsory for all students irrespective of their preferred, chosen route (2.1).
- The e-learning implementation of courses needs to be improved by including diverse online tools and applications that would enable social interactions and communication (2.1).
- Study guides need to be refined to include details and weighting about interactive activity, exercises etc (2.4).
- All courses (study guides and online implementation) need to be reviewed to ensure compliance with elearning methodology and principles (5.1).
- Course literature needs to be reviewed as regards both Compulsory reading and Recommended further literature, and updated with more current sources (5.1).

The EEC would like to thank all UCY staff and students involved in the process of evaluation for their time and availability during the visit and also express gratitude to Ms Emily Alexandridou for organising and facilitating a smooth evaluation process.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Pamela Burnard	
Valerie Sollars	
Arniika Kuusisto	
Christothea Herodotou	
Maria Kramvi	

Date: 12/4/24