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].

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report
(E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:** Open University of Cyprus

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

- **Department/ Sector:** Greek Linguistics and Literature, Distance Learning MA programme

- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)** Formerly 2-year-long 120 ECTS MA programme, now revised to be 1.5-year-long 90 ECTS MA programme

  In Greek: Μάστερ στην Ελληνική Γλώσσα και Λογοτεχνία

  In English:

  MA in Greek Linguistics and Literature

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

- **Programme's status: Currently Operating**

- **Concentrations (if any): 2 proposed**

  In Greek: Γλωσσολογία + Λογοτεχνία
  In English: Linguistics + Literature

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The external evaluation committee consisted of four faculty members and one student member (names listed below), who conducted a one-day-long *online or virtual* visit on 14 January 2022, given that the pandemic still prevented us from visiting the physical campus facilities. However, the administrative and teaching staff of the MA programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature had made every effort to provide the committee members with detailed reports beforehand and to upload sample materials on a Google drive (including materials related to the library facilities). Mr Costas Constantinou of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education had forwarded the reports and also the agenda with the zoom link.

Rector Petros Pasiardis and Vice-Rector Yannis Manolopoulos, representing the OUC's upper administration, introduced us to the university, its history, and its mission in distance learning. Erato Ioanna Sarri then took the lead speaking as Coordinator of the University's Internal Quality Assurance Committee. Associate Professor Avra Sidiropoulou, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, introduced the Faculty and the various undergraduate and MA programmes it has on offer. Associate Professor Stavroula Tsiplakou, Academic Coordinator of the MA programme under evaluation and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, introduced the programme's structure, its strengths and weakness, and the proposed revisions to the programme. She also took the lead discussing the programme's standards, the admission criteria for prospective students, the learning outcomes and ECTS, the contents of the thematic units, and the persons involved in the programme's design and development. Drs Panagiotis Seranis, Vasiliki Dimoula, Spyros Armostis, Theoni Neokleous, and Eleni Papargyriou delivered short, module-focused presentations. The external evaluation committee members asked questions throughout these introductions and presentations and discussed academic qualifications, teaching materials and library resources, criteria and methods of assessment, publications, research interests and activities, administrative duties, workload issues, compliance with Teaching ESG, etc. The committee also met privately with two MA graduates of the programme and with members of the administrative, technical, and library support staff (Elena Gregoriou, Michalis Epiphaniou, Antri Avraamidou, and Panagiotis Themistokleous). The Student and Programmes Support Unit shows strong, as does the commitment of the library personnel. All support staff make training sessions available to staff as well as to students, and we were briefed on these trainings as well.

The day ended with the committee's briefing on topics of importance for the future of the programme and the well-being of students and staff (administrative support, high tuition costs, staff remuneration, etc.). The committee members decided to each take charge of a particular section of this report (according to their specialties and interests), and to finalize the report during the last week of January 2022.

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B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Gonda Van Steen	Professor, Koraes Chair	King's College London
George Xydopoulos	Professor	University of Patras
Kenny Smith	Professor	University of Edinburgh
Stylianos Hatzipanagos	Professor	University of London
Katerina Nikolaou	Student member	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

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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C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*

- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
    (a) *sub-areas*
    (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
    (c) *some questions that EEC may find useful.*

- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*

- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*

- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*

- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

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

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

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

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*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

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 members of the External Evaluation Committee were given a warm welcome by the leadership of the OUC, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and all the teaching and administrative personnel of the MA Programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature. All of these parties have been very supportive of our work as evaluators and have provided detailed information on and access to all relevant materials. More specifically, the following items stood out:
* The MA programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature has designed a comprehensive curriculum with a very clear structure and has procedures in place to adequately review contents and methods each year. The learning outcomes, too, are regularly reviewed. Bibliographies are kept up-to-date as are criteria and methods of assessment.
* As part of its ongoing self-evaluation, the programme staff has proposed modifications to the curriculum, switching from a 2-year-long 120 ECTS programme to a 1.5-year-long 90 ECTS (i.e. semester-based) programme. This revision must make the programme more versatile and also more financially attractive to its student body. It will also make the programme more compatible with part-time study, which is a necessity for many students who work full-time or part-time jobs.
* In light of the above, the introduction of the new thematic unit 'Research Methods for Language and Text' (which includes exposure to the Digital Humanities) is an exciting development as well.
* The quality of teaching is ensured through student evaluations collected at the end of each semester for every thematic unit by the Quality Assurance Committee. Procedures guarantee the regular internal appraisal of the curriculum and the more comprehensive three-year reviews of the teaching staff.
* The appointment procedures of the associate faculty members and adjuncts/tutors are very clear. Great care is taken to select the best-qualified applicants, all Ph.D. holders with English-language fluency, with extensive research and publication records in their area of specialization and ample experience in teaching in a distance learning programme. For many tutors, their position in this MA programme has been a springboard to a more permanent academic position elsewhere.
* The members of the academic staff, both permanent and adjunct staff, take a vested interest in the MA programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature, which started in academic year 2011/2012 and which was recently revised to better fit the needs of its student audiences.
* The programme has its own dedicated website, and the technical and other staff members take great care to update it regularly. The website contains a description of the programme (history, objectives, outcomes). It specifies criteria for student admission, ECTS requirements, and it contains a list of available course offerings.
* The programme takes every step to assist students with learning disabilities or special needs (including vision- or hearing-impaired students).

* The programme's guidelines for quality assurance are clear and have been taken to heart by its teaching staff. The material provided in the context of this evaluation covered all the areas required. Additionally, the CYQAA provides clear guidance for quality assurance procedures and the results are published on the CYQAA website.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.
* The MA programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature is a highly commendable example of a well-designed and well-functioning distance learning programme. It is particularly user-friendly for working students and students with responsibilities as caregivers. The programme is a great asset in OUC's pursuit to become an internationally attractive university, given that it already attracts many students from Greece. The language of instruction is Greek, commensurate with the contents of the thematic units. But the choice of Greek as the (necessary) language of instruction excludes foreign students whose Greek may not be adequate.
* The e-Class and e-Learning Platforms are constantly kept up-to-date, so as to remain user-friendly for both the teaching personnel and the students.
* The programme is regularly reviewed. The proposed and major revision of the programme is the subject of our current evaluation.
* Information about performance indicators is systematically gathered and analysed.
* Regular and very effective communication channels have been created between the teaching personnel and the students that go well beyond the e-Class, such as hybrid teleconferences, additional guidance provided by the instructors, catch-up sessions for students with less training in language and literature, close thesis supervision, etc. Also, seminars and lectures with invited speakers are recorded and are made available to students. Alumni keep being invited to public lectures, which they appreciate. Alumni are also very appreciative of having had the opportunity to participate in ongoing research projects—which speaks to the strength of the contents of the programme and of the staff's close advising and mentoring.
* The programme stays in touch with former students and follows their career paths. Through its intensive outreach efforts, the teaching staff has built a supportive alumni network and a sense of a true student community overall.

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 proposed second track of Literature and Literature Literacy could be strengthened by adding a second permanent faculty member who will also serve in the role of academic coordinator of this particular track—in parallel with the first track in Linguistics, where Associate Professor Stavroula Tsiplakou serves in the role of academic coordinator. Such an initiative will need the support of the upper levels of the OUC's administration and will require an allocation of financial resources as well. We will return to this and other suggestions in the conclusions to this document.

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	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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**
> **2.4 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:*
  - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *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)*
  - ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
  - *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
  - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?*
- *How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings

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

The programme covers an appropriate range of core subject matter, covering a mix of theoretical and empirical studies, and dissertation projects span an impressive range of topics.

A challenge of the programme is that students come from a wide range of backgrounds, and they have to be brought up to speed rapidly in a range of theoretical and practical topics. However, the teaching staff are clearly aware of these challenges and the course materials are designed to provide refresher/intro-level materials as appropriate, while being mindful that most students are also engaged in full-time work. Staff are also responsive to student interest/demand, which has led to the introduction of a new course (Literary Literacies) featuring an education dimension.

The main practical component is in research methods. A single research methods course introduces both qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as text analysis, which is challenging in the time available; for instance, the approach to statistics is largely limited to descriptive statistics. However, the range of dissertation topics suggests that this preparation is sufficient for students to undertake original research in e.g. quantitative sociolinguistics if they so wish, although this presumably requires substantial support from dissertation project supervisors.

A range of assessments are used, including standard written essays, final exams, and also regular (up to weekly) group-based activities. Most of the information with which we were provided focused on these weekly activities, which are a new requirement. The ideas showcased for the activities are quite inventive and will likely lead to good student engagement. However, many of these seem to be very substantial pieces of work requiring substantial student time to complete and substantial staff time to support/mark. We would therefore encourage the course leaders to consider whether these activities could be made less demanding. One way to retain some of the exciting but more weighty activities would be to move them from the list of activities to the written assessment category.

The processes for assessing student work and monitoring consistency of marking across tutors are appropriate, with several levels of oversight in addition to marking rubrics and introductory training materials for markers. Final exams were previously conducted in assessment centres but have moved online during the covid era, which is convenient for students and meets the approval of staff. This practice could be continued post-pandemic.

The initial report we received highlighted a problem with pastoral care for students, arising from a staffing gap in the central university administration. We were pleased to hear that this issue has since been resolved, and the level of pastoral support is good.

The arrangements for e-learning are appropriate, allowing both asynchronous individual study and opportunities for live engagement with teaching staff and other tutors. Some of the assessment activities make extensive use of discussion boards to facilitate discussion among students.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.
- Dedicated and engaged teaching staff who are clearly committed to and respected by their students.
- Courses well-designed for students who are new to the topic or in need of a refresher, while still providing good broad coverage.
- Imaginative and ideas for assessed activities which are likely to result in good student engagement
- Strong sense of community and identification with the programme among students we interviewed, even after graduation.

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.

- We strongly recommend that module leaders are mindful of the burden on students and (particularly) adjunct faculty arising from the weekly assessment activities. These activities may need to be made less demanding.
- Use of online final exams (rather than in-person exams in assessment centres) should be considered post-covid if supported by the faculty and by the professional and regulatory bodies.
- Thought should be given to whether students in certain specialisations might require additional support on the basics of inferential statistics, to allow them to interpret the literature in e.g. quantitative areas of linguistics.

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	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	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.*

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:

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

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

The programme depends on a single permanent faculty member whose expertise is in linguistics, with the majority of the teaching activities carried out by adjunct faculty (who are typically early career and/or have another academic appointment). The faculty involved in the programme are appropriately qualified, and indeed many of them have impressive CVs, which show active research programmes as well as expertise in teaching.

Procedures for recruiting adjunct faculty are well established, and adjuncts are appointed for several years and often re-appointed, which allows them to build up experience and expertise in their role. There is appropriate training and oversight of adjuncts, and adjunct faculty spoke highly of the technical support provided to familiarize them with the various systems involved in teaching. We were also heartened to hear that adjunct faculty had had success in obtaining permanent full-time posts at other universities, which might indicate that serving as adjunct faculty here provides a boost to their careers.

However, we did have several concerns in this area - not about the quality of the staff, but about the support provided by the university to those staff members. The programme has a single faculty member with an expertise in linguistics. Given the broad coverage of the programme, adding a second permanent faculty member with expertise in Greek literature seems essential. We understand that adjunct faculty have recently faced a worsening of their remuneration. However,

since the quality of the programme and therefore of the student experience crucially depends on the efforts of these adjuncts, all efforts must be made to improve their pay and conditions. We are also concerned that the Open University provides relatively little support for research and public outreach activities by adjunct faculty, and we encourage the administration to do what they can to support those activities. Such support could include funding for research or paid time for research or outreach activities. This will ensure that the Open University avoids merely being parasitic on research funded by other universities or on the adjunct faculty's own time. It is in the Open University's best interest to bolster the research credentials of its faculty. In general, adjunct faculty emphasised the value of their position for enhancing their CVs, rather than the remuneration. While it is good that they felt teaching at the OUC enhanced their CVs, it is important that the university avoids exploiting that fact and also provides appropriate pay for what is excellent and time-consuming work.

Finally, student evaluations play an important role in the assessment of adjunct faculty. While some role for student feedback is of course important, we ask that those acting on those student evaluations bear in mind the well-known biases in student evaluations based on certain traits of the individual being evaluated (gender, ethnicity, and so on).

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.
- Permanent and adjunct faculty are appropriately and indeed impressively qualified.
- Procedures for appointing and retaining adjunct faculty ensure that faculty members have the opportunity to build expertise in their role.

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.

- To address the imbalance in permanent faculty: a permanent faculty member should be recruited in Greek literature
- To increase pay for adjunct faculty, which should be a priority
- To provide additional support for research and public engagement activities by faculty, with adjunct faculty being consulted on what would be most useful in this area.

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

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

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

<u>**Sub-areas**</u>

    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

<u>Standards</u>

- *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

<u>Standards</u>

- *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

<u>Standards</u>

- *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

<u>Standards</u>

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

The MA in Greek Linguistics and Literature (MAGLL) carries out appropriate processes of admission consistently and in a transparent manner according to the regulations of the Open University of Cyprus (OUC) and to the standards of the European University System. Prospective students receive full information about the study programme and the organisation of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS), where the programme belongs, through the relevant websites (of SHSS and of MAGLL https://www.ouc.ac.cy/index.php/el/the-university-4/faculties/sake and https://www.ouc.ac.cy/index.php/el/studies/programmes/master/master-egl). Useful information about the programme is also given in specially organised online events.

Admission requirements are set in accordance with international standards. They include a recognised first degree (BA or equivalent) from an accredited university-level institution anywhere in the world without specifying one or more subjects of the applicants' degree. Most students admitted hold first degrees in areas related to the subjects covered in the MAGLL, that is in Linguistics, Literature, Education Sciences, but also in Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, etc. Individuals who have not yet been officially awarded their first degrees at the time of submitting their application are offered admission on the condition that they hold their degree before embarking on their study at the OUC.

Even though the MAGLL is taught exclusively in Greek, students are expected to have a "very good command" of English in order to be able to have access to the relevant bibliographical resources of the disciplines studied. However, this requirement is not specified in terms of the CEFR levels. Given that the MAGLL is a programme offered exclusively online, students are expected to have adequate

computer skills in order to be able to participate in all aspects and functions of the virtual educational environment.

The MAGLL programme attracts students of different aspirations and backgrounds, mainly in the field of public and private education, and it offers them opportunities to broaden their personal and professional horizons.

Enrollment in the MAGLL programme from the first year of its operation in 2011 to 2018-2019 showed a fluctuation ranging from a maximum of 76 students in 2011-2012 to a minimum of 14 students in 2018-2019. Efforts should be made to enhance the enrollment rates of the programme, to safeguard its sustainability, given that it offers an attractive study scheme and that it is a programme of high academic quality in terms of organization, content, and operation as well as in terms of human resources. To achieve this goal, OUC/SHSS/MAGLL officials should conduct a thorough study of the competition among similar Master's programmes offered by university-level institutions in Cyprus and Greece, focusing on the content of the programmes, the audiences targeted, and the tuition fees policies.

4.2 Student progression

Student progression is subject to OUC regulations and is appropriately monitored and acted upon. Progression processes are clearly set in the whole programme as well as in each module. Tutors are in close collaboration with programme officials in monitoring students' academic status and performance. All processes are adequately supported by administrative staff of high expertise in their job, who are very dedicated to supporting all aspects of the programme.

Students interviewed during the evaluation event were extremely positive and expressed their absolute satisfaction with the way they are supported in their study and learning experience by members of staff and especially by the module and programme coordinators as well as by administrative services.

The programme shows a good graduation rate reaching an average of 53 graduates per academic year. Graduates can expand their employment opportunities in different areas of language and literature education as well as in education management and policy and in applied linguistics research.

4.3 Student recognition

Recognition of the students' first degrees is based on regulations and processes of the Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS). Recognition of formal and non-formal learning is also ensured by the particular admission criteria set by the programme that refer to a differential academic background of applicants in a wide range of Humanities and Social Sciences subjects. It is worth noting, however, that the method of determining English language knowledge of applicants (i.e., certificate or testing) is not specified in the admission requirements.

4.4 Student certification

Student certification is governed by the regulations of the OUC, applying to all faculties, departments, and programmes of the institution. Students receive certification explaining the qualification they have gained, including the learning outcomes and the content they have achieved, as well as the level, content, and status of the studies they have pursued and successfully completed.

Students who are enrolled in individual modules of the MAGLL also receive relevant certification.

The certification of studies is based on the ECTS system, which is applied across the curriculum.

Strengths

1. Appropriate processes of admission are in operation.
2. Prospective students receive full and clear information about admission criteria and procedures.
3. Students are extremely satisfied with the support they receive from programme staff.
4. Academic qualifications held by candidates are appropriately recognised by the Cyprus NARIC authority.
5. Student certification is appropriately organised and implemented.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. The knowledge of English does not appear to be formally set to a CEFR level. We recommend that it is set to a minimum of B2.
2. To ensure that there are sufficient numbers of students admitted in each study period to maintain viability of the programme by considering competition in Cyprus and Greece in academic but also in financial terms.
3. To establish a better promotion strategy for the programme to attract larger number of students, e.g. by organising live events for presenting the programme to teachers associations, etc.

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

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

- *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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

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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> - *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
> - *How is student mobility being supported?*

Findings

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

Resources

Overall, the programme offers satisfactory resources to support student learning (including learning materials, IT infrastructure, and administrative support). The university library offers resources through access to the university library records (hard and electronic copies) and access to networks of libraries, via interlibrary loans and access to e-books and journals).

Student Induction

Online induction to distance and online learning is offered to students in the beginning of their studies.

Pedagogical approach

Pedagogical considerations seem to be taken into account in the design and delivery of the programme. There is an institutional infrastructure that supports the development and delivery of online and distance learning. This support infrastructure is operated by an office focused on quality assurance and by the educational technology lab as far as the underpinning technologies are concerned.

Learning technologies

The university employs a virtual learning environment (VLE, Moodle) and auxiliary technologies to support interaction between students and teaching staff. The VLE seems to be the central focus of online pedagogy and is used for weekly teleconferences, group discussions and additional activities. There was ample evidence in the discussion that we had with the team that they had developed interactive activities and exercises that supported student learning. The programme team have also developed a significant number of interactive activities to support formative assessment activities that prepare for the end-of-term exams. These represent 10% of the overall marks for each module. However, the examples we were given represented learning materials in which transmission (videos) rather than interaction was the main characteristic.

Assessment

Assessment approaches employ a model in which the end-of-term exams (at exam centres) are the key assessment event in the student journey (60%). According to the programme team, this is the expectation from regulatory and professional bodies. During the pandemic exam operations were moved online. The final exams employ an open book approach.

Career support

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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Career guidance is offered to students in the programme to support employment opportunities despite the fact that a significant number of students in the programme are professionals, who complete the programme for career advancement purposes.

Accessibility and software design

In terms of learning the team discussed their approach to making sure that students' special needs are embedded in the learning design of materials for the programme (e.g., adhering to the W3C guidelines).

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

- The staff support functions led by academics and administrators seems to work well and there are professional development support activities in place for staff with appropriate breadth and depth.
- The use of formative assessment activities is commendable in the distance learning delivery.
- Online learning design conforms to accessibility requirements.
- Employing open-book exams is an excellent pedagogical practice and addresses issues of plagiarism and 'cheating' that can be common in distance learning environments.
- It was good to see that the online learning approach was recognised and that the OUC had received a relevant prize for this achievement.

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.

Learning design
- Establishing a set of learning design benchmarks that all online modules would follow, could help students to have a uniform experience in their study of the modules of the programme.
- Further attention should be given to enhancing the interactive elements in the programme's online platform to provide personalised feedback to student input. The panel had the opportunity to discuss the structure of these activities and examples were given by the team, but we did not have the opportunity to see how these interactive activities work in practice.
- It would be interesting to see further advancements in the use of learning technologies (both quality and quantity) taking advantage of, for instance, the expertise the university has acquired by being involved in EU-funded projects.

Assessment

The programme team should think about diversifying assessment by offering alternative forms of assessment, e.g., continuous assessment by coursework or project-based work instead of the current focus on end-of-term exams.

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	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	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.

The OUC's MA programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature is a programme with proven strengths. It adheres to the best practices, corresponding to the EQF, and deserves the best possible support, to enable it to continue to carry out its important mission. The programme has a very dedicated staff (administrative as well as teaching staff) and can refer to a track record of success placing its graduates in key educational, cultural, and administrative positions in Cyprus. The programme has also served as a launching pad for junior staff members to make the leap from adjunct/tutor to a tenure-track or more permanent academic position elsewhere. These are important achievements in an otherwise adverse climate of financial constraints (competition of other, less expensive programmes in Greece or 'trendier' MA programmes in Cyprus itself). The proposed revision of the programme, to reduce the length and thus also the cost of the programme, will be a decisive step to secure its future. Important, too, will be the appointment of a second permanent faculty member who will dedicate himself/herself fully to the academic coordination of the literature track (including taking on the occasional Ph.D. student in that field). This appointment, long overdue, will also secure a better balance between the linguistics and the literature track. It will also keep the two tracks in the kind of powerful synergy that has worked so well thus far and that has strengthened the learning experience of the students (as eloquently attested to by one of the alumni interviewees). It is to the staff's credit that they have proposed the modernization of the programme themselves, and that they have been most keen themselves to keep the programme competitive as well as high-calibre.

The external evaluation committee members support the need to address the lack of an academic counsellor, who will keep a close watch on students' progress. This student advisor could be shared among several programmes. As such, the role is different from the one described above.

Formative assessment activities in regular coursework need to be kept to a reasonable amount, commensurate with the workload of the students as well as the teaching staff.

Another suggestion relates to the optional requirement of the MA thesis, which counts for the equivalent of two thematic units (at 15 ECTS each and for a total of 30 ECTS). The external evaluation committee proposes to offer a pathway back to more coursework to students who, for various reasons, cannot finish the research and writing that the 12,000+ words thesis requires. This change would offer the students the prospect of finishing their degree in a timely fashion and would add to the student numbers in existing thematic units. Significantly, too, it would unburden the teaching staff from the weight of carrying over unfinished theses from semester to semester, if there is no prospect of them ever being completed. Since no credit goes to the staff member for supervising a thesis-'forever'-in-progress, this change would help to protect some of the staff member's time (on which there are already plenty of other demands). Many students will do better juggling full-time employment with essay requirement but less so with the thesis option. Graduating without a thesis but with extra coursework will not hinder their professional advancement, even if it pre-empts the option of going on to do advanced Ph.D. work.

There is always a need for more scholarship support for students. The same goes for research allowances for members of the teaching staff. The basic salary of the teaching staff needs to keep pace with comparable rates at other institutions in the open university system.

Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Gonda Van Steen	
George Xydopoulos	
Kenny Smith	
Stylianos Hatzipanagos	
Katerina Nikolaou	
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Date: 24 January 2022