Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 4th April, 2024.

External Evaluation Report

(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:** Cyprus University of Technology (CUT)
- **Town:** Limassol
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School of Health Sciences
- **Department/ Sector:** The Department of Rehabilitation Sciences
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
  In Greek:
  Διδακτορικό στην Περιβαλλοντική και Δημόσια Υγεία
  (4 χρόνια, 240 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)
  In English:
  PhD in Environmental and Public Health (4 years, 240 ECTS, Doctorate)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** Currently operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**
  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC: Professor Marie Hasselberg/ Chair, Associate Professor Signe Smith Jervelund, Professor Tea Lallukka & student representative Stephanos Hilides) visited the premises of the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) on the 2nd of April, 2024, at 8:45-18.30.

The EEC members met administrative and teaching staff as well as students of the Master in Public Health Programme (MPH) and PhD in Environment and Public Health programme in person, while one Faculty member joined the meeting online (Iosif Kafkalas, Health Economics and Policy). The committee was welcomed by the Dean, Professor Ekaterini Lambrinou and other Faculty members. First, the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and Chairperson of the Internal Quality Assessment Committee of the University, Professor Nicolas Tsapatsoulis gave a presentation of an overview of Cyprus University of Technology with a special focus on the MPH and PhD programme, and then Associate Professor Nicos Constantinou, the Head of Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, where the MPH programme belongs to, presented more details on the Department. Next, Associate Professor Costas Christophi, Faculty coordinator of the Public Health Master Program, presented the MPH Programme. After the Master programme presentation, Associate Professor Andrie Panayiotou, Faculty Coordinator of the Environmental and Public Health Doctoral Program, presented the PhD programme. In the afternoon, the EEC separately met with administrative staff only, teacher staff only to discuss the courses, and finally with the students and graduates only, to hear their views and feedback on both programmes.

Each presentation was followed by a discussion session, where the EEC asked questions and was provided answers.

The agenda of the day needed to be slightly modified during the day as some discussions took a longer time than initially anticipated. Also, onsite visit to the premises was shortened due to time constraints and took place during two shorter breaks. Otherwise, the visit took place as planned. The ECC asked for the presentations which were provided at the earliest convenience by the CUT/CII. Everything was well organised, and we had the agenda and we received rich materials beforehand, which was very helpful. We also held an online meeting to go through the agenda and tasks prior to travelling to Cyprus. The meeting was organised by the Education Officer of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

Details of the day, findings, strengths, and areas of improvement the committee noted are summarised in the following sections of this report.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Marie Hasselberg (Chair)	Professor in Public Health Epidemiology, Head of Department of Global Public Health	Karolinska Institutet, Sweden
Signe Smith Jervelund	Head of Studies of Public Health Science, Associate Professor - Promotion Programme	University of Copenhagen, Denmark
Tea Lallukka	Professor of Medical Sociology, vice-head of the Department of Public Health	University of Helsinki, Finland
Stephanos Hilides	Student Representative (year 6 medical student)	University of Cyprus, Cyprus

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.

The PhD programme in Environmental and Public Health is governed by the Postgraduate Study Rules of the Cyprus University of Technology and the Internal rules and regulations of the doctoral degree program. Additionally, the University has developed a PhD Thesis Quality Assurance Framework.

The program is equivalent to 4 years full-time studies with a total of 240 ECTS, distributed as 30 ECTS per semester of which 60 ECTS is post-graduate courses and 180 ECTS correspond to the research project, including the comprehensive examination, preparation and presentation of a research proposal and the writing of the PhD thesis. Up to a maximum of 40 ECTS coursework can be credited towards the doctoral program. A mandatory course in Research Methodology must be taken by all students. The programme of elective courses for each individual student is determined by the Thesis Advisory Committee depending on the PhD-project and approved by the Department Postgraduate Studies Committee and the Department Council.

Students are also expected to attend seminars, guest lectures and a PhD Colloquium series where PhD-students present their projects to their peers.

PhD-positions are announced on the University's website twice every year and open to apply for graduate students. Additionally, they are advertised within the relevant research field for the position.

The Department Postgraduate Committee recommends three faculty members for a Selection Committee for each position, to be appointed by the Department Council. The Selection Committee evaluates the applications, conducts interviews with the candidates and prepares a report. The successful candidate is admitted to the PhD-programme after the recommendation is approved by the Department Council.

The specific aims of the programme align with the main aim of the programme. The learning outcomes of the programme relates to broader skills and knowledge in Environmental and Public health research methods. The PhD-courses have clearly formulated learning outcomes. Additionally, each student has individual learning outcomes reflecting specific knowledge, skills and competences related to their PhD-project.

The students prepare a research protocol during the first two semesters and present it to the Thesis Advisory Committee before the end of the 2nd semester.

The guideline of the programme is that the number of PhD positions offered by the Department per year should not exceed the number of Faculty members.

Strengths

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

The Quality Assurance Framework in place outlines the requirements that apply to all University Doctoral programmes. It contains regulations regarding announcements and academic procedures (e.g. supervision, progress evaluation and feedback), requirements and quality criteria for the doctoral thesis, arrangements for the examination, learning resources and other support mechanisms.

The Department has an internal Quality Assurance Committee where students are represented. Evaluations are conducted for each course and the teacher adjusts the courses when needed. The results of the evaluation can also be discussed by the department.

The Department implements the provision of ECTS procedures mechanisms for evaluating the PhD applications.

It is a well-structured monitoring process for students' progress. The students are required to submit an annual progress report to be approved by The Advisory Committee and then forwarded to the Studies and Student Affairs Office of the University. If a student fails to submit a progress report unjustifiably or if the report is not approved twice consecutively, the student will have three months to re-apply before being referred to the Department Council for consideration to terminate the studies.

The employability of graduates is taken into consideration when the programme is designed, and this programme aims to train the next generation of environmental and public health specialists in Cyprus and elsewhere.

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 students are encouraged and supported to visit and attend conferences and courses at other universities. Every student has an opportunity to apply for an individual €1000 grant for conference participation to present their results. This is available once during the PhD studies. Additional grants for student exchange could be announced and arranged as travel grants at the department or at university level.

The students emphasised the importance of being integrated in research projects and to communicate and collaborate with other stakeholders outside the university.

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

2.2 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology
2.3 Practical training
2.4 Student assessment

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

Standards

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

2.2 Practical training

Standards

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

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

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

Findings

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

The PhD programme is clear, well-structured, and publicly available. The PhD students are required to take courses equivalent to 60 ECTS (albeit dependent on the individual PhD student's prior educational composite, where PhD students can be credited up to 40 ECTS if they already have relevant passed relevant courses) with one compulsory course in Research Methods and Biostatistics (10 ECTS) and a number of elective courses at a postgraduate level (chosen on basis of research field/individual needs). Thus, the process of teaching and learning is flexible and supports PhD students' individual development. The teaching at the postgraduate level is research-based, drawing upon both the teachers' own research and relevant research contributions from other scholars. There seem to be more courses in quantitative methods, while qualitative-oriented courses need to be taken at other departments. The postgraduate courses entail a compulsory, anonymous assessment, facilitating enhancements in course quality. From the PhD students' statements, it appears that the practical parts and theoretical studies go hand-in-hand, which is highly appreciated by the students.

The compulsory course contains two lectures on ethics. For every project handling personal data, the project needs to be approved by the ethics committee, which gives the PhD students hands-on-learning on research ethics. Moreover, there are resources regarding this available online, including a checklist for research ethics. Some of the projects also need approval from the Data Protection Agency of Cyprus.

The supervisors are actively engaged with the PhD students, attentive to their individual needs and supporting them individually in their academic endeavours. Each supervisor cannot have more than five PhD students, ensuring that the PhD students have adequate academic support and guidance. The PhD students' statements support this, and it appears that the relationship between supervisor and PhD student is characterised by mutual respect. The PhD students are encouraged to take an active role in driving the learning process and promote a sense of autonomy, maturity, and independence.

Internal research meetings, where PhD students can present their work as well as their presentation for their oral exam and receive feedback, are in place to support the students, but not at the department or national level.

Social responsibility is taken seriously in the PhD programme. Serving the local community of Cyprus through translational research is promoted by the programme.

A regular assessment of the PhD students seems to be appropriate, consistent, transparent, and fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures. The annual progress report is to be approved by an advisory committee. An oral exam takes place after the 4th semester with the option of failing or passing. If the PhD student fails the first time, the student will get a second chance. The assessment allows PhD students to be given feedback from non-supervisors, which strengthens the learning process and increases the academic level of the work.

Research stays at other institutions/abroad are not obligatory. As the CII faculty has been very successful in attracting EU Horizon grants, many of the PhD students do their PhD study in connection to European/international projects, enhancing their international collaborative skills as well as awareness of other ways of research set-ups. Similarly, CUT has joined the European Universities of Technology international network as part of their strategy to expand their horizon, fostering more exchanges of knowledge and people, and more interaction, promoting new ways of learning, doing research, etc.

The requirements for the PhD are clear and in line with international standards. A formal procedure for the PhD thesis assessment is in place, and the criteria for the final assessment of the PhD thesis follows international standards.

Strengths

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

The PhD programme is clear and well-structured. The course requirements are suitable for allowing flexibility. The practical parts and theoretical studies go hand-in-hand, which is pertinent at the PhD level. Social responsibility is taken seriously in the PhD programme, also promoting translational research.

The supervisors of the PhD programme are highly skilled and internationally recognised experts within their respective fields. The supervisors maintain active involvement with PhD students, attentively addressing their individual needs and providing personalised support throughout their academic pursuits. A maximum limit of five PhD students per supervisor is enforced, ensuring each student receives sufficient academic assistance and guidance.

A regular assessment of the PhD students seems to be appropriate, consistent, transparent, and fairly applied to all students with the option of being dismissed from the programme if not progressing satisfactorily.

The requirements for the PhD are clear and in line with international standards. A formal procedure for the PhD thesis assessment is in place, and the criteria for the final assessment of the PhD thesis follow international standards.

The former PhD candidates have been very successful and productive with 58 peer-reviewed publications as first authors plus co-authored more than 110 other publications up to date conducted by six candidates, which testify to a strong and prosperous programme.

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.

Although the compulsory PhD course contains two lectures on ethics and the individual PhD projects that handle personal data also need to go through a formal ethics approval process, ethical considerations are very important in public health research. To reduce the risk of misconduct and the like, we recommend a mandatory course on research ethics for all PhD students in the programme. Similarly, a mandatory GDPR-course (e.g. online) could be in place for those handling personal data. More course options on PhD level could also be considered; it could be a cross-faculty strategy.

Research stays at other institutions/abroad are not obligatory. To enhance the students' access to other expertise, exposure to other research environments, networking opportunities, and academic and personal growth, promotion of research stays at other institutions, nationally or preferably internationally, could be beneficial. In general, access and collaboration with healthcare institutions and external stakeholders could be individual-level-based and it could be improved on a more structural level.

We suggest that the PhD programme consider facilitating possibilities for PhD students to present their work outside the department. Similarly, research meetings at the departmental level where PhD students can present their work and receive feedback, could improve their academic trajectories.

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

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

3.1 **Teaching staff recruitment and development**
3.2 Teaching staff number and status
3.3 **Synergies of teaching and research**

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

Recruitment is based on four ranks: lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor (tenure) and a full professor (tenured). Evaluation for promotion is mandatory for all lectures after 3 years and for assistant professors after 4 years. In promotion, supervision of PhD students plays a role. It was explained that for promotion, the department puts emphasis on research, grants, and publications. For a PhD programme's teachers, publication record is of particularly high importance. This is also reflected in the fact that the professors also need to attract large competitive external grants such as EU grants (Horizon).

The teachers have high level competence in epidemiology and biostatistics as well as environmental health. External expertise in qualitative methods are provided, however, in the future, internal faculty staff experienced in qualitative methods could be an asset to the programme. Using mixed methods would help provide a more comprehensive picture on key public health challenges.

In general, working conditions for the teachers and staff appeared to be good. They should ideally have approximately 50% of their time for research, 30% for teaching, and 20% for administrative tasks, however, in reality, especially time for research is more limited, as administrative duties, teaching and supervision tend to take more than the allocated time. We got the impression that the teachers support their PhD students, and the PhD students confirmed that they get the support and supervision they need.

The publications of the faculty staff are closely linked to the programme's courses and staff's experience in the fields supports the PhD candidates. They prepare the substudies together in groups, present the results to the group members and can also present them in seminars. There is also an Annual Public Health Day that provides all PhD students with new information and training on ongoing and new results and studies of the area of public health.

A course on ethics is not mandatory to all, but research ethics is covered during other courses and all students get practical training in considering ethical aspects when they develop their research proposals.

Strengths

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

Engaged, motivated and enthusiastic staff is a clear strength. They are also strong experts in biostatistics and epidemiology as well as in environmental health, which strongly supports the PhD students when developing their proposals, writing scientific papers and doing analyses. Courses on methods are advanced and should provide the students with proper skills in quantitative methods. As an additional advantage, they learn how to conduct systematic reviews. Faculty members seem to be highly available for their PhD students. As the programme is small, an advantage is that every staff member knows everyone and the work community is tight. They also know all their PhD students well, which is likely to help in teaching and meeting the needs of the students and providing them excellent opportunities to grow as researchers in active research groups.

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 programme could consider ways to interact more closely with both private and public external partners to identify new research topics and potentially also secure funding.

The EEC proposes that future recruitments of new faculty members consider applicants with strong competences in qualitative methods. We also suggest that a short ethics course will be developed and made mandatory alongside the current course on research methods.**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)*

Sub-areas

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

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

4.2 Student progression

Standards

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

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

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

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

4.4 Student certification

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

PhD-positions are announced on the University's website twice every year and open to apply for graduate students. Additionally, they are advertised within the relevant research field for the position. Specific degree requirements are available online.

The Department Postgraduate Committee recommends three faculty members for a Selection Committee for each position, to be appointed by the Department Council. The Selection Committee evaluates the applications, conducts interviews with the candidates and prepares a report. The successful candidate is admitted to the PhD-programme after the recommendation is approved by the Department Council.

It is a well-structured monitoring process for students' progress. The students are required to submit an annual progress report to be approved by The Advisory Committee and then forwarded to the Studies and Student Affairs Office of the University. If a student fails to submit a progress report unjustifiably or if the report is not approved twice consecutively, the student will have three months to re-apply before being referred to the Department Council for consideration to terminate the studies. There is an oral qualifying exam by the end of the 4th semester.

The thesis is submitted after approval of the Advisory Committee. The external members of the Examination Committee submit independently written reports with comments on the content of the thesis. Together with the report from the Examination Committee and other supporting documents, a copy of the thesis is submitted to the Secretariat of the Senate for examination.

Strengths

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

The requirements and process for admission of students are clearly formulated and publicly available at the University's website. The students perceived the assessment to be transparent and clear.

A transparent system for monitoring students' progress is in place.

The process for PhD-studies is summarised on the University's website.

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 finds no particular areas of improvement. The requirements and process for admission are clear and publicly available.

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

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

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

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

5.4 Student support

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

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

Findings

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

Adequate and readily accessible resources, including advanced equipment within the environment health discipline, are provided to the PhD students and support the achievement of the PhD programme.

Physical resources, including library and study facilities, IT infrastructure, appeared to adequately support the study programme. Dedicated librarians are available to assist the PhD students. Support for open access publications is in place. A high emphasis has been put on readily available online resources, including VPN, a plagiarism detection tool, research guides, video tutorials, etc. Similarly, a number of human support resources are available to support the PhD students, including counselling, support for academic writing, and a network for learning which helps PhD students on new ways of teaching, how to do your thesis, etc. Overall, the students express great satisfaction with the available resources.

Strengths

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

Dedicated librarians are available to assist the PhD students. An extensive support system is in place.

While PhD students must fund their tuition themselves, the supervisors do their best to assist in covering the tuition based on internal and external funds. Furthermore, there are scholarships available for the PhD students to apply. A small travel grant is also available to all PhD students (€1000 to apply for once during their PhD studies).

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 career guidance could be developed and promoted for PhD students (especially for PhD candidates who will continue a career outside the CUT).

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

6. Additional for doctoral programmes *(ALL ESG)*

Sub-areas

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

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
  - *the examinations*
  - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
  - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

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

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*

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

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?*

Findings

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

The PhD programme in Environmental and Public Health has been operating since 2013.

PhD-positions are announced on the University's website twice every year and open to apply for graduate students. Additionally, they are advertised within the relevant research field for the position.

Admission to the programme is via an online application, which is clear and well planned. The applicants have to provide the requested official documentation, proof of their English proficiency (for those whose native language is not English, as the programme is taught in English), and an essay describing their research experience and future plans. As an additional advantage, the students are offered an opportunity to visit the premises for a few days, to meet the teachers and get more information about the PhD programme's suitability to them.

The Department Postgraduate Committee recommends three faculty members for a Selection Committee for each position, to be appointed by the Department Council. The Selection Committee evaluates the applications, conducts interviews with the candidates and prepares a

report. The successful candidate is admitted to the PhD-programme after the recommendation is approved by the Department Council.

The purpose of the programme is to prepare the students for academic careers in both research and teaching, having four linked objectives: improve scientific way of thinking, advance environmental and public health research nationally and internationally, translational approaches for instance to strengthen the link between research and policy making, and provide the students with research skills and knowledge including full range of methodological approaches. There are eight learning outcomes to achieve that are related to knowledge in literature and methods, bioethics, applying for grants, making scientific research and communicating the results. There is only one compulsory course (methodology) and several elective ones, including further courses on methods and bioethics. Doctoral thesis preparation takes up most of the studies. Candidates first prepare a proposal over 2 semesters, and then altogether 3 papers (or more) that comprise their dissertation. At least one paper has to be published to graduate, and they have to present the results in a conference at least once.

The programme usually takes a minimum of 4 years, but it is possible to complete in 3 years, if the candidate has prior skills. The requirements for the degree also include passing an oral examination by the end of the 4th semester, completing a total of 60 ECTS, and completing and submitting the PhD. They can fail the examination once and then revise their work, if needed. Some of the courses overlap with the courses within the master programme, but others like the mandatory one, are only available for doctoral students. There is also a maximum duration for the studies, which is 6 years for full time students and 8 years for part-time students.

The academic support for the student mainly comes from their appointed Advisory Committee. A research advisor for each PhD-student is appointed by the Department Council after recommendation from the Departmental Postgraduate Studies Committee. Two faculty members from the department or another Department of the University are appointed as additional members of the Advisory Committee.

So far, the six completed PhD candidates have first-authored 58 publications and co-authored more than 110 other publications.

Funding for the programme is from the government, from teaching assistantships, internal CUT grants as well as from external grants that are highlighted as particularly relevant for the future (large EU grants for instance).

The thesis is submitted after approval of the Advisory Committee. The external members of the Examination Committee submit independently written reports with comments on the content of the thesis. Together with the report from the Examination Committee and other supporting documents,

a copy of the thesis is submitted to the Secretariat of the Senate for examination. A public, oral defence takes place subsequently to the Examination Committee's recommendation.

Strengths

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

The requirements and process for admission of students are clearly formulated and publicly available at the University's website. The students also reported the assessment process to be transparent and clear.

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 finds no particular areas of improvement. The requirements and process for admission are clear and publicly available. The students reported to be satisfied with the assessment, supervision and support from the faculty.

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Compliant
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
6.3	Supervision and committees	Compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

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

The PhD programme on Environmental and Public Health was established in 2013 and is well-developed. The application process is clear and transparent, and the students are given explicit and helpful feedback on their acceptance or rejection into the programme. The same applies to criteria regarding courses and the dissertation. Furthermore, the students found the criteria satisfactory and fair.

The faculty members are internationally recognised scholars within their fields and highly engaged. Many of them have been working at the department for several years, having therefore in-depth knowledge of the programme, its development, and the department functions. They have impressive scientific records of various fields, in particular on conducting advanced quantitative research as well as systematic reviews.

One of the four objectives of the programme is to provide students with research skills and knowledge, including a full range of methodological approaches. However, the focus currently is mainly on quantitative methods. The EEC recommends incorporating a broader range of courses within public health and opportunities to learn about different research methods to better achieve this intended objective. The eight learning outcomes of the programme highlight e.g. bioethics, but the committee noted that the course on ethics is not mandatory. However, teachers explained that ethical points are covered in the core course and students need to learn about ethics when they make their proposals for their dissertation. As bioethics are such an important part of public health research, a mandatory course could be considered.

The PhD students of the programme have been very productive, publishing close to 200 scientific papers up to date, either as first authors or as co-authors. The programme's funding is well secured from the government, internal and external grants and via internships. The future of the programme is promising, and it is expected to attract both more external funding, students and staff members outside Cyprus.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	*Signature*
Click to enter Name	
Professor Marie Hasselberg (Chair)	
Associate Professor Signe Smith Jervelund (Member)	
Professor Tea Lallukka. (Member)	
Mr. Stephanos Hilides. (Student member)	

Date: 4th April, 2024