

**Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in
Higher Education**

Republic of Cyprus

**External Evaluation Report
Program of Study**

**Institution: University of Nicosia and University of Patras
Program of Study: Master of Education in Special
Education – Distance Learning**

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INSTRUCTIONS:

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 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015].

The document is duly completed by the External Evaluation Committee for each program of study. The ANNEX (Doc. Number 300.1) constitutes an integral part of the external evaluation report for the external evaluation accreditation of a new program of study.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE:

NAME	TITLE	UNIVERSITY / INSTITUTION
Gottfried Biewer	Professor in Special Needs and Inclusive Education	University of Vienna, Austria
Charalampos Karagiannidis	Associate Professor, ICT Applications in Learning and Special Education	University of Thessaly, Greece
Eleni Lazaratou	Associate Professor of Child Psychiatry	National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
Evridiki Kasapi	Student in Education Sciences	University of Cyprus, Cyprus

INTRODUCTION:

I. The External Evaluation procedure

- Short description of the documents that have been studied, of the on site visit meetings, and of the on site visit to the infrastructures.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) was comprised of 4 members, as enumerated and listed in the previous page.

The EEC was provided the following documents before the site visit:

- The application for the MEd in English and Greek, which includes the Internal Evaluation Report
- The Syllabi of the courses of the Programme
- The Guidelines for the Members of the EEC

The EEC visited the University of Nicosia on 19/09/2016, from 10:00 to 17:00. Before the visit, EEC attended an orientation meeting and briefing at the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, to provide contextual information on the role of and the expectations from the Committee. The site meeting was attended by the University of Nicosia Rector and Vice Rector, the Dean of the School of Education, and the Executive Dean of Distance Learning, most of the academic personnel of the Program and three Faculty members of the University of Patras.

II. The Internal Evaluation procedure

- Comments concerning the quality and the completeness of the application submitted by the institution of higher education (Doc. Number 200.1), as well as concerning the overall acceptance of and participation in the quality assurance procedures, by the institution in general and by the program of study under evaluation in particular.

The application submitted by the Institutions is complete and elaborate, apart from some parts which are highlighted in the following sections.

The personnel of the Programme showed a strong commitment in the evaluation procedure, and provided all requested information.

The EEC expresses its gratitude for the collaboration, attitude and professionalism of all personnel involved.

FINDINGS:

1. EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING WORK – AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- **Organization of Teaching Work**
- **Teaching**
- **Teaching personnel**

The effectiveness of the teaching work and available resources is satisfactory.

The organization of the teaching work is inline with current practice for distance learning courses. The course material is available online and updated regularly, the teaching methods are targeted to distance learners, and the teaching personnel is experienced in their field and in distant education.

A more proactive academic mentoring is recommended to be implemented, since the expected students will be from different backgrounds, needs, etc.

2. PROGRAM OF STUDY AND HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

- **Purpose and Objectives and learning outcomes of the Program of Study**
- **Structure and Content of the Program of studies**
- **Quality Assurance of the Program of studies**
- **Management of the Program of Study**
- **International Dimension of the Program of Study**
- **Connection with the labor market and the society**

The program of study and higher educational qualifications are satisfactory.

The purpose, objectives and learning outcomes of the program of study are satisfactory, and the integration of a practicum adds value to the existing program.

The structure and content of program of studies is satisfactory, although a more inclusive perspective (following recent advancements in the field) could be considered, as explained in more detailed in the respective section. Also, the program should encourage more students to elaborate a masters thesis.

The quality assurance of the program is satisfactory.

The management of the program is satisfactory, building on the experience of the Universities involved in similar programs.

The international dimension of the program is limited, which is understandable given that the main target group of students come from Greece. It is recommended however that the international dimension is given more attention, so as to be able to attract students from other countries as well.

The connection with the labor market and society in Greece is straightforward. As described above, it could also be extended to other countries during the next few years.

3. RESEARCH WORK AND SYNERGIES WITH TEACHING

- Research Teaching Synergies

The Universities have well skilled staff, experienced in teaching and in research, so they are capable to perform a study program in Special Education at a Master Level. The results of their research are published in recognized journals, and can be used in science-based teaching. The academic research personnel's activities are satisfactory, as demonstrated in the publication lists, research projects and participation in conferences.

However students are less involved in the research activities of the Universities. This is understandable for distance learners, on the other hand the Universities could consider ways for engaging students in research, possibly through encouraging them to select and write a Master thesis.

4. ADMINISTRATION SERVICES, STUDENT WELFARE AND SUPPORT OF TEACHING WORK

- **Administrative Mechanisms**
- **Infrastructures / Support**
- **Financial Resources**

The administrative mechanisms are satisfactory, building on the long experience of the Universities involved in similar programs.

The infrastructure and the financial resources are adequate to run the program in an effective way.

5. DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS

All previous parts of this report refer to a distance learning program.

6. DOCTORAL PROGRAMS OF STUDY

Not applicable.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE¹

- The present situation of the program, good practices, weaknesses that have been detected during the external evaluation procedure by the external evaluation committee, suggestions for improvement.

Overall the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) evaluates positively the program for a “Master of Education in Special Education – Distance Learning” for a joined degree from the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras. The integration of the practical training adds significant value to the existing program.

The main suggestions of the EEC can be summarised as follows:

- The program of studies can be updated with recent advances in the field, and adopt terminology which refers to the current state of the art.
- The skills of the program graduates can be detailed in a diploma supplement.
- A more intense mentoring mechanism can be implemented, catering for the individual needs of the students who have different backgrounds.
- In the near future, the universities should consider to accommodate students who may not necessarily be interested in working in the Greek public education.
- A more elaborate international dimension (e.g. teach in English) should also be considered to ensure the sustainability of the program.

¹ It is highlighted, at this point, that the External Evaluation Committee is expected to justify its findings and its suggestions on the basis of the Document num.: 300.1. The External Evaluation Committee is not expected to submit a suggestion for the approval or the rejection of the program of study under evaluation. This decision falls under the competencies of the Council of the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of higher education.

Quality Standards and Indicators

External Evaluation of a New Program of Study

Institution: University of Nicosia and University of Patras

Program of Study: Master of Education in Special Education – Distance Learning

Duration of the Program of Study: 4 academic semesters

Evaluation Date: 19/09/2016

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 2016”.

The document describes the quality standards and indicators, which will be applied for the external evaluation of programs of study of institutions of higher education, by the External Evaluation Committee.

DIRECTIONS: Note what is applicable for each quality standard/indicator.

1. Applicable to a minimum degree
2. Applicable to a non satisfactory degree
3. Applicable to a satisfactory degree
4. Applicable to a very satisfactory degree
5. It applies and it constitutes a good practice

It is pointed out that, in the case of standards and indicators that cannot be applied due to the status of the institution and/or of the program of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted and a detailed explanation should be provided on the institution’s corresponding policy regarding the specific quality standard or indicator.

Members of the External Evaluation Committee

NAME	TITLE	UNIVERSITY / INSTITUTION
Gottfried Biewer	Professor in Special Needs and Inclusive Education	University of Vienna, Austria
Charalampos Karagiannidis	Associate Professor, ICT Applications in Learning and Special Education	University of Thessaly, Greece
Eleni Lazaratou	Associate Professor of Child Psychiatry	National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
Evridiki Kasapi	Student in Education Sciences	University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Date and Time of the On-Site Visit: 19. September 2016

Duration of the On-Site Visit: 7 hours, 10:00 to 17:00

1. EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING WORK – AVAILABLE RESOURCES						
1.1	Organization of teaching work	1	2	3	4	5
1.1.1	The student admission requirements to the program of study, are based on specific regulations which are adhered to in a consistent manner.			X		
1.1.2	The number of students in each class allows for constructive teaching and communication, and it compares positively to the current international standards and/or practices.				X	
1.1.3	The organization of the educational process safeguards the quality implementation of the program's purpose and objectives and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Particularly, the following are taken into consideration:				X	
1.1.3.1	The implementation of a specific academic calendar and its timely publication.				X	
1.1.3.2	The disclosure of the program's curricula to the students, and their implementation by the teaching personnel				X	
1.1.3.3	The course web-pages, updated with the relevant supplementary material				X	
1.1.3.4	The procedures for the fulfillment of undergraduate and postgraduate assignments / practical training			X		
1.1.3.5	The procedures for the conduct and the format of the examinations and for student assessment				X	
1.1.3.6	The effective provision of information to the students and the enhancement of their participation in the procedures for the improvement of the educational process.				X	
1.1.4	Adequate and modern learning resources, are available to the students, including the following:				X	
1.1.4.1	facilities				X	
1.1.4.2	library				X	
1.1.4.3	infrastructure				X	
1.1.4.4	student welfare			X		

	1.1.4.5	academic mentoring				X	
1.1.5	A policy for regular and effective communication, between the teaching personnel and the students, is applied.					X	
1.1.6	The teaching personnel, for each course, provide timely and effective feedback to the students.					X	
1.1.7	Statutory mechanisms, for the support of students and the communication with the teaching personnel, are effective.					X	
1.1.8	Control mechanisms for student performance are effective.					X	
1.1.9	Support mechanisms for students with problematic academic performance are effective.					X	
1.1.10	Academic mentoring processes are transparent and effective for undergraduate and postgraduate programs and are taken into consideration for the calculation of academic work load.					X	
1.1.11	The program of study applies an effective policy for the prevention and detection of plagiarism.						X
1.1.12	The program of study provides satisfactory mechanisms for complaint management and for dispute resolution.					X	

Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.

The admission requirements are clear and in line with current practices. However it is not clear how the University will select among the students when the number of applications is higher than the capacity of the study program. Exclusion criteria are missing. The institutions may consider to formulate exclusion criteria.

The expected number of students (650) is within the norm of distance learning programs. The majority of students are expected to be from Greece, a minority will be from Cyprus. It is not possible to calculate the number of other international students, as the teaching language is Greek. The University could consider in the future to run the program in English language to attract other international students. The number of students per class (30) is appropriate and fulfils international standards.

The course materials (assignments, bibliography, etc.) are updated each semester taking to account students' feedback. Reactive academic mentoring is effective, as the University contacts inactive students to help them. The University could consider more proactive mentoring to prevent learning problems. This seems to be an important issue, as the students in distance learning have diverse skills, and their specific needs are assessed at an early stage.

The practical training guide is yet to be written and it is recommended that the

practical scale of assessment should be similar to other courses, and not only “pass” or “fail”.

It is positive that fee reductions are enabled for students with good academic performance. It is recommended to offer also some full scholarships for exceptional students in severe economic deprivation.

The Universities applies an effective strategy to detect plagiarism in texts of both languages, English and Greek, including past theses.

Note, additionally:

- α) the expected number of Cypriot and International Students in the program of study: 650 in total
- β) the countries of origin of the majority of students: Greece and Cyprus
- γ) the maximum planned number of students per class-section: 30

1.2	Teaching	1	2	3	4	5
1.2.1	The methodology utilized in each course is suitable for achieving the course’s purpose and objectives and those of the individual modules.				X	
1.2.2	The methodology of each course is suitable for adults.				X	
1.2.3	Continuous-formative assessment and feedback are provided to the students regularly.				X	
1.2.4	The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance, are clear, adequate, and known to the students.				X	
1.2.5	Educational activities which encourage students’ active participation in the learning process, are implemented.				X	
1.2.6	Teaching incorporates the use of modern educational technologies that are consistent with international standards, including a platform for the electronic support of learning.				X	
1.2.7	Teaching materials (books, manuals, journals, databases, and teaching notes) meet the requirements set by the methodology of the program’s individual courses, and are updated regularly.				X	

Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.

The level of teaching is in accordance with international standards. As the University of Nicosia has a strategy with a focus on distance learning, it is recommended to use more often ICT tools for the contact with students (at least 6 times per semester) and

to be more engaged in developing existing software tools such as Moodle. It is also recommended to give more attention so that the research results of the Center for the Advancement of Research and Development in Education and Technology are used for developing sophisticated educational technologies.

1.3	Teaching Personnel	1	2	3	4	5
1.3.1	The number of full-time academic personnel, occupied exclusively at the institution, and their fields of expertise, adequately support the program of study.				X	
1.3.2	The members of teaching personnel for each course have the relevant formal and fundamental qualifications for teaching the course, as described by the legislation, including the following:				X	
1.3.2.1	Subject specialization, preferably with a doctorate, in the discipline.				X	
1.3.2.2	Publications within the discipline.				X	
1.3.3	The specializations of Visiting Professors adequately support the program of study.				X	
1.3.4	Special Teaching Personnel and Special Scientists have the necessary qualifications, adequate work experience and specialization to teach a limited number of courses in the program of study.				X	
1.3.5	In every program of study the Special Teaching Personnel does not exceed 30% of the Teaching Research Personnel.				X	
1.3.6	The teaching personnel of each private institution of tertiary education, to a percentage of at least 70%, has recognized academic qualification, by one level higher than that of the program of study in which he/she teaches.				X	
1.3.7	In the program of study, the ratio of the number of courses taught by full-time personnel, occupied exclusively at the institution, to the number of courses taught by part-time personnel, ensures the quality of the program of study.				X	
1.3.8	The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching personnel is adequate for the support and safeguarding of the program's quality.				X	
1.3.9	The academic personnel's teaching load does not limit the conduct of research, writing, and contribution to the society.				X	

1.3.10	Future redundancies / retirements, expected recruitment and promotions of academic personnel safeguard the unimpeded implementation of the program of study within a five-year span.				X	
1.3.11	The program's Coordinator has the qualifications and experience to efficiently coordinate the program of study.				X	

Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.

It is very positive, that all the teaching/research personnel and the special teaching personnel have a PhD or doctoral degree. The CVs of the personnel illustrate a long academic experience and a strong commitment on research and dissemination. The University of Nicosia has also applied for 3 more full-time positions in order to support the new DL-program in Special Education.

2. PROGRAM OF STUDY AND HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS						
2.1	Purpose and Objectives and learning outcomes of the Program of Study	1	2	3	4	5
2.1.1	The purpose and objectives of the program of study are formulated in terms of expected learning outcomes and are consistent with the mission and the strategy of the institution.				X	
2.1.2	The purpose and objectives of the program and the learning outcomes are utilized as a guide for the design of the program of study.				X	
2.1.3	The higher education qualification and the program of study, conform to the provisions of their corresponding Professional and Vocational Bodies for the purpose of registration to these bodies.				X	
2.1.4	The program's content, the methods of assessment, the teaching materials and the equipment, lead to the achievement of the program's purpose and objectives and ensure the expected learning outcomes.				X	
2.1.5	The expected learning outcomes of the program are known to the students and to the members of the academic and teaching personnel.				X	
2.1.6	The learning process is properly designed to achieve the expected learning outcomes.				X	
2.1.7	The higher education qualification awarded to the students, corresponds to the purpose and objectives and the learning outcomes of the program.				X	
<p>Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.</p> <p>The outcomes of the courses are very well described in the syllabi of the study program. It is recommended to formulate a description of the competences and skills of the graduates in the form of a diploma supplement, as a basis of information for national and international employers.</p> <p>The main added value of the proposed program (with respect to the existing program in Special Education) is the addition of the practicum which enables the graduates to register in the professional and vocational bodies in Greece.</p>						
2.2	Structure and Content of the Program of Study	1	2	3	4	5
2.2.1	The course curricula clearly define the expected learning outcomes, the content, the teaching and learning approaches and the method of assessing student performance.				X	

2.2.2	The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied and there is true correspondence between credits and workload per course and per semester for the student either he / she studies in a specific program or he/she is registered and studies simultaneously in additional programs of studies according to the European practice in higher education institutions.			X		
2.2.3	The program of study is structured in a consistent manner and in sequence, so that concepts operating as preconditions precede the teaching of other, more complex and cognitively more demanding, concepts.				X	
2.2.4	The higher education qualification awarded, the learning outcomes and the content of the program are consistent.				X	
2.2.5	The program, in addition to the courses focusing on the specific discipline, includes an adequate number of general education courses.				X	
2.2.6	The content of courses and modules, and the corresponding educational activities are suitable for achieving the desired learning outcomes with regards to the knowledge, skills, and abilities which should be acquired by students.				X	
2.2.7	The number and the content of the program's courses are sufficient for the achievement of learning outcomes.				X	
2.2.8	The content of the program's courses reflects the latest achievements / developments in science, arts, research and technology.			X		
2.2.9	Flexible options / adaptable to the personal needs or to the needs of students with special needs, are provided.				X	

Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.

The structure of the study plan should give more attention to different levels of learning and instructions between study beginners and more advanced students in higher semesters. In the current version it seems that the same level of skills is expected in every course. It is recommended that some basic courses shall be preconditions for advanced studies. In addition, given the diverse background of students, a foundation course could be considered for students without adequate background in educational sciences.

The content of the study program was accredited in 2008. In the meantime perspectives and topics of special education changed and the scientific discourse is shifting from a traditional special education perspective towards a view on disability with a focus on inclusion. This shift is visible in course descriptions, but not in the overall design of the study program and

the main terms of description.

In the study program modules on special education and inclusive education are modules with equal number of credits. A societal vision of transmission from special to inclusive education, referring to the UNCRPD and other international declarations is not clearly visible. The composition of modules represents a rather traditional view on the subject, in some parts also related to the medical model of disability.

It is recommended that the following aspects shall be included in the study plan:

- A view on disability including somatic, societal, personal and environmental factors, as it is represented by the ICF
- A vision on development towards an inclusive society, respecting the rights of persons with disabilities in the education sector
- A new view on didactics, including topics like barriers and facilitators for learning, universal design for learning, constructivist approaches on didactics, etc.
- Work with the parents of the disabled children

The study program focuses on teachers, but is also open for other professional fields. School education is one field of employment for graduates, but also at an international level there is a need of qualified staff in other areas of disability support such as early education support systems, preschool education, adult education, transmission from school to the labor market, adult assistance, parents' counselling, etc. It is recommended to give more attention to these fields of employment and to integrate appropriate content in the study plan. This also could open new fields of employment for those graduates who do not get a position in Greek public schools.

Given the number of students, it is understandable that the Masters thesis is not mandatory. Nevertheless, in order to enhance the quality of the outcome it is recommended that the Universities find ways of increasing the number of Master theses which is currently only 20%.

The EEC has no evidence about students in other programs and no information about simultaneous studies in other institutions.

2.3		Quality Assurance of the Program of Study	1	2	3	4	5
2.3.1	The arrangements regarding the program's quality assurance define clear competencies and procedures.					X	
2.3.2	Participation in the processes of the system of quality assurance of the program, is ensured for					X	
	2.3.2.1	the members of the academic personnel				X	
	2.3.2.2	the members of the administrative personnel				X	
	2.3.2.3	the students.				X	
2.3.3	The guide and / or the regulations for quality assurance, provide detailed information and data for the support and management of the program of study.					X	

2.3.4	The quality assurance process constitutes an academic process and it is not restricted by non-academic factors.						X	
<p>Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.</p> <p>The Universities have a strong and continuous commitment on quality assurance in the existing programs, which was demonstrated during the site visit. The EEC expects that the established methods of quality assurance shall be performed in the new study program.</p>								
2.4	Management of the Program of Study		1	2	3	4	5	
2.4.1	Effective management of the program of study with regard to its design, its approval, its monitoring and its review, is in place.					X		
2.4.2	It is ensured that learning outcomes may be achieved within the specified timeframe.					X		
2.4.3	It is ensured that the program's management and development process is an academic process which operates without any non-academic interventions.					X		
2.4.4	The academic hierarchy of the institution, (Rector, Vice-Rectors, Deans, Chairs and Programs' Coordinators, academic personnel) have the sole responsibility for academic excellence and the development of the programs of study.					X		
2.4.5	Information relating to the program of study are posted publicly and include:			X				
2.4.5.1	The provisions regarding unit credits			X				
2.4.5.2	The expected learning outcomes			X				
2.4.5.3	The methodology			X				
2.4.5.4	Course descriptions			X				
2.4.5.5	The program's structure			X				
2.4.5.6	The admission requirements			X				
2.4.5.7	The format and the procedures for student assessment			X				
2.4.6	The award of the higher education qualification is accompanied by the Diploma Supplement which is in line with the European and international standards.			X				
2.4.7	The effectiveness of the program's evaluation mechanism, by the students, is ensured.					X		
2.4.8	The recognition and transfer of credit units from previous studies is regulated by procedures and regulations which ensure that the					X		

	majority of credit units is awarded by the institution which awards the higher education qualification.				
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Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.

The University of Nicosia runs a similar program, which ensures that the proposed program can run successfully at all levels. Comments on the missing diploma supplement are already mentioned in Section 2.1.

Practical training is to be performed in Greece as one of the home countries of the involved institutions.

Information on the program at the University of Nicosia website is insufficient or missing. Existing information was not updated at the time of the site visit (19-20 September 2016), though the start of the program is estimated for the beginning of October 2016. It is strongly recommended that the website shall be updated with the necessary information within the next few days.

In the case of practical training, note:

- The number of credit units for courses and the number of credits for practical training: 90 and 30 respectively
- In which semester does practical training takes place: 4th semester
- Note if practical training is taking place in a country other than the home country of the institution which awards the higher education qualification: the practical training is taking place in the home country of one of the institutions involved (University of Patras)

2.5	International Dimension of the Program of Study	1	2	3	4	5
2.5.1	The program's collaborations with other institutions are compared positively with corresponding collaborations of other departments / programs of study in Europe and internationally.			X		
2.5.2	The program attracts Visiting professors of recognized academic standing.			X		
2.5.3	Students participate in exchange programs.		x			
2.5.4	The academic profile of the program of study is compatible with corresponding programs of study in Cyprus and internationally.				x	

Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.

The program is comparable with other similar programs in Europe, but the international collaboration of distance learning requires more sophisticated ways of collaboration than face-to-face-programs. In the evaluated program international collaboration is limited to

collaboration between Cyprus and Greece.

Though both Universities in Nicosia and Patras have ERASMUS agreements, students from the distance learning programs seem not to be involved in exchange activities.

Also, comment on the degree the program compares positively with corresponding programs operating in Cyprus and abroad in higher education institutions of the same rank.

The program is comparable with corresponding programs in Greece, Cyprus and abroad.

2.6	Connection with the labor market and the society	1	2	3	4	5
2.6.1	The procedures applied, so that the program conforms to the scientific and professional activities of the graduates, are adequate and effective.				X	
2.6.2	According to the feasibility study, indicators for the employability of graduates are satisfactory.				X	
2.6.3	Benefits, for the society, deriving from the program are significant.					X

Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.

It is appreciated that, through the integration of practical studies, the employability for the public school system will be enhanced for Greek teachers for the near future. There is little evidence for the sustainability of the program beyond Greek public education. It is recommended to address other fields of professional activity, also to attract other students, as mentioned in Section 2.2.

It is appreciated, that knowledge on disability issues in education is transferred to teachers at a large scale, who were not connected with it till now. This can facilitate the acceptance of students with special educational needs in the regular education system. In this sense, the proposed program can have a very positive impact on the Cypriot and Greek societies, contributing towards the reduction of stigma and acceptance of diversity.

3. RESEARCH WORK AND SYNERGIES WITH TEACHING						
3.1	Research - Teaching Synergies	1	2	3	4	5
3.1.1	It is ensured that teaching and learning have been adequately enlightened by research.				X	
3.1.2	New research results are embodied in the content of the program of study.				X	
3.1.3	Adequate and sufficient facilities and equipment are provided to support the research component of the program of study, which are available and accessible to the personnel and the students.				X	
3.1.4	The results of the academic personnel's research activity are published in international journals with the peer-reviewing system, in international conferences, conference minutes, publications etc.				X	
3.1.5	External, non-governmental, funding for the academic personnel's research activities, is compared positively to the funding of other institutions in Cyprus and abroad.				X	
3.1.6	Internal funding, of the academic personnel's research activities, is compared positively to the funding of other institutions in Cyprus and abroad.				X	
3.1.7	The policy for, indirect or direct, internal funding of the academic personnel's research activity is satisfactory.				X	
3.1.8	The participation of students, academic, teaching and administrative personnel of the program in research activities and projects is satisfactory.			X		
3.1.9	Student training in the research process is sufficient.			X		
<p>Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.</p> <p>Students are not enough involved in the research activities of the Universities. This is understandable for distance learners. On the other hand the Universities could consider ways for engaging students in research, possibly through their Masters theses, as it is recommended in Section 2.</p> <p>The academic research personnel activities are satisfactory, as demonstrated in the publication record, research projects and participation in conferences.</p>						

4. ADMINISTRATION SERVICES, STUDENT WELFARE AND SUPPORT OF TEACHING WORK						
4.1	Administrative Mechanisms	1	2	3	4	5
4.1.1	There is a Student Welfare Service that supports students with regards to academic and personal problems and difficulties.				x	
4.1.2	Statutory administrative mechanisms for monitoring and supporting students are sufficient.				x	
4.1.3	The efficiency of these mechanisms is assessed on the basis of specific criteria.			x		
<p>Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.</p> <p>The experience of the Universities with similar programs (and comparable numbers of students) ensures the effective and successful administration. No specific criteria for assessing these services are provided.</p>						
4.2	Infrastructure / Support	1	2	3	4	5
4.2.1	There are suitable books and reputable journals supporting the program.				X	
4.2.2	There is a supportive internal communication platform.				X	
4.2.3	The facilities are adequate in number and size.				X	
4.2.4	The equipment used in teaching and learning (laboratory and electronic equipment, consumables etc) are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate.				X	
4.2.5	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are adequate and accessible to students.				x	
4.2.6	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are updated regularly with the most recent publications.				x	
4.2.7	The teaching personnel are provided with training opportunities in teaching method, in adult education, and in new technologies on the basis of a structured learning framework.				X	
<p>Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may</p>						

have on each standard / indicator.

The involvement of the University of Patras facilitates the use of libraries all over Greece.

4.3	Financial Resources	1	2	3	4	5
4.3.1	The management and allocation of the financial resources of the program of study, allow for the development of the program and of the academic / teaching personnel.				X	
4.3.2	The allocation of financial resources as regards to academic matters, is the responsibility of the relevant academic departments.				X	
4.3.3	The remuneration of academic and other personnel is analogous to the remuneration of academic and other personnel of the respective institutions in Cyprus.				X	
4.3.4	Student tuition and fees are consistent to the tuition and fees of other respective institutions.				X	

Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.

The student tuition fees are above the average of other distant learning programs in special education in Greece. The addition of practicum justifies higher fees.

The following criterion applies additionally for distance learning programs of study.

5.	DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS	1	2	3	4	5
5.1	Feedback processes for teaching personnel with regards to the evaluation of their teaching work, by the students, are satisfactory.				X	
5.2	The process and the conditions for the recruitment of academic / teaching personnel, ensure that candidates have the necessary skills and experience for long distance education.				X	
5.3	Through established procedures, appropriate training, guidance and support, are provided to teaching personnel, to enable it to efficiently support the educational process.				X	
5.4	Student performance monitoring mechanisms are satisfactory.				X	
5.5	Adequate mentoring by the teaching personnel, is provided to students, through established procedures.				X	
5.6	The unimpeded long distance communication between the teaching personnel and the students, is ensured to a satisfactory degree.				X	
5.7	Assessment consistency, its equivalent application to all students, and the compliance with predefined procedures, are ensured.				X	
5.8	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) comply with the requirements provided by the long distance education methodology and are updated regularly.				X	
5.9	The program of study has the appropriate and adequate infrastructure for the support of learning.				X	
5.10	The supporting infrastructures are easily accessible.				X	
5.11	Students are informed and trained with regards to the available educational infrastructure.				X	
5.12	The procedures for systematic control and improvement of the supportive services are regular and effective.				X	
5.13	Infrastructure for distance education is comparable to university infrastructure in the European Union and				X	

	internationally.					
5.14	Electronic library services are provided according to international practice in order to support the needs of the students and of the teaching personnel.				X	
5.15	The students and the teaching personnel have access to the necessary electronic sources of information, relevant to the program, the level, and the method of teaching.				X	
5.16	The percentage of teaching personnel who holds a doctorate, in a program of study which is offered long distance, is not less than 75%.				X	

Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.

The comments in the other sections are related to the Distance Learning program - no additional comments.

If the following apply, note “√” in the appropriate space next to each statement. In case the following statements do not apply, note what is applicable:

The maximum number of students per class-section, should not exceed 30 students.	X
The conduct of written examinations with the physical presence of the students, under the supervision of the institution or under the supervision of reliable agencies which operate in the countries of the students, is compulsory.	x
The number of long distance classes taught by the academic personnel does not exceed the number of courses taught by the teaching personnel in conventional programs of study.	-

The following criterion applies additionally for doctoral programs of study.

6.	DOCTORAL PROGRAMS OF STUDY	1	2	3	4	5
6.1	The provision of quality doctoral studies is ensured through Doctoral Studies Regulations.					
6.2	The structure and the content of a doctoral program of study are satisfactory and they ensure the quality provision of doctoral studies.					
6.3	The number of academic personnel, which is going to support the doctoral program of study, is adequate.					
6.4	The doctoral studies' supervisors have the necessary academic qualifications and experience for the supervision of the specific dissertations.					
6.5	The degree of accessibility of all interested parties to the Doctoral Studies Regulations is satisfactory.					
6.6	The number of doctoral students, under the supervision of a member of the academic personnel, is apt for the continuous and effective feedback provided to the students and it complies with the European and international standards.					
6.7	The research interests of academic advisors and supervisors are satisfactory and they adequately cover the thematic areas of research conducted by the doctoral students of the program.					
<p>Justify the answer you have provided and note the additional comments you may have on each standard / indicator.</p> <p>Note the number of doctoral students under the supervision of each member of the academic personnel of the program and the academic rank of the supervisor.</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>						

FINAL REMARKS – SUGGESTIONS

Please note your final remarks and suggestions for the program of study and/or regarding particular aspects of the program.

Overall the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) evaluates positively the program for a “Master of Education in Special Education – Distance Learning” for a joined degree from the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras.

An important added value of the program is the integration of the practicum, which facilitates access to employment in the public school sector for teachers in Greece.

The EEC detected areas of improvement and further development. The overall design of the study program gives not enough attention to current shifts in the discipline, which are characterized by the changing perspective towards inclusion.

In favor of the sustainability of the program, qualification for professional fields outside the public school sector should be taken into consideration. A description of the competences of graduates in the form of a diploma supplement should be written and published for the use of potential employers and for international comparison of the students’ skills.

The program should be structured in a way that basic courses precede those with specialized content. Foundation courses could be considered to be offered for those students without a strong background in educational sciences.

The Universities should give more attention to public presentation of information for students, related to the program of study, especially on the University websites. The involvement of students in research, e.g. by Master theses, and in international relation activities, such as exchange programs, should be promoted.

Names and Signatures of the Chair and the Members of the External Evaluation Committee:

Name:	Signature:

Date: