

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 09/12/2022

# External Evaluation Report (Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School of Humanities and Social Sciences
- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Social Sciences
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

## In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό Δίπλωμα στην Σχολική Ψυχολογία

## In English:

Master of Science in School Psychology

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):** not applicable

**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

The onsite visit took place according to the following schedule:

### December 7th, 2022

09:15 – 09:30 Welcoming of the EEC at the University of Nicosia's premises.

09:30 – 09:45 A brief introduction of the members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC).

09:45 – 10:25 A meeting with the Rector and the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs (brief presentation of the Institution and Q and A session) and a meeting with the members of the Internal Evaluation Committee.

10:25 – 11:00 A meeting with the Head of the Department of Social Sciences (brief presentation of the School's / Department's structure; Mission and strategic planning (including SWOT analysis); Connecting with society; Development processes).

11:00 – 11:10 Coffee Break

11:10 – 12:10 A meeting with the Head of the Department of Social Sciences, the Coordinator and the Coordination Committee of the programmes Educational Psychology (1.5 years / 90 ECTS, Master of Science, Conventional) and Educational Psychology (1.5 years / 90 ECTS, Master of Science, E- Learning) (discussion of the programme's standards, admission criteria for prospective students, the learning outcomes and ECTS, the content and the persons involved in the programme's design and development as well of methodology and equipment used in teaching and learning (i.e. software, hardware, materials, online platforms, teaching material, evaluation methods, projects, samples of written examinations / thesis).

12:10 – 13:00 A meeting with the coordinator and members responsible for the Distance Learning Unit (brief presentation and Q&A session on e-learning philosophy and methodology, e-learning material at the appropriate level according to EQF, interaction plan and interactive weekly activities, and study guides).

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch Break

14:00 – 15:00 A meeting with the Head of the Department of Social Sciences, the Coordinator and the Coordination Committee of the programme School Psychology (2.5 years / 150 ECTS, Master of Science, Conventional) (discussion of the programme's standards, admission criteria for prospective students, the learning outcomes and ECTS, the content and the persons involved in the programme's design and development as well of methodology and equipment used in teaching and learning (i.e. software, hardware, materials, online platforms, teaching material, evaluation methods, projects, samples of written examinations / thesis).

15:00 – 16:00 A meeting with members of the teaching staff on each course for all the years of study (Q&A session with discussion on the CVs (i.e. academic qualifications, publications, research interests, research activity, compliance with Staff ESG), any other duties in the institution and teaching obligations in other programmes, the content of each course and its implementation (i.e., methodologies, selected bibliography, students' workload, compliance with Teaching ESG), the learning outcomes, the content and the assessment of each course and their compliance with the level of the programme according to the EQF, and the assessment criteria, samples of final exams or other teaching material and resources).

16:00 - 16:15 Coffee Break

16:15 – 17:00 A meeting with students and graduates only.

17:00 – 17:30 A meeting with members of the administrative staff only.

17:30 – 18:00 Conferring of the EEC (to debrief on the day, to sum up and to discuss the plan for the following day).

### **December 8th, 2022**

09:00 – 09:45 On site visit to the Center for Therapy, Training and Research (outside of the premises of the institution).

10:00– 11:00 On site visit to the premises of the institution (i.e. library, computer labs, research facilities, psychology lab).

11:00 – 11:30 Discussion on the practical training aspect of the programmes.

11:30 – 12:00 Live attending of course (if applicable), or of recoded lesson.

12:00 – 12:30 Conferring of the EEC (coordination before final deliberation).

12:30 – 13:00 A meeting with the Dean of the School, the Head of the relevant department and the programmes' Coordinator - exit discussion (questions, clarifications and initial comments from the EEC).

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

### **The EEC studied the following materials:**

- Document: 200.1 – APPLICATION FOR EVALUATION – ACCREDITATION PROGRAMME OF STUDY, including information about the programme's general profile, the programme's content (structure, course distribution per semester, course descriptions), teaching staff (qualifications, teaching periods, detailed biographical notes) and a SWOT analysis
- virtual tour of the university premises
- powerpoint presentations
- samples of examination papers, assignments and dissertations

### **Remarks on the preparatory materials and the on-site visit**

The documentation the EEC received beforehand was somewhat confusing. In the originally submitted documents (and even in the updated and revised documents), some parts were not translated into English. Also, no clarification was given on the fact that the curriculum of the School Psychology programme submitted for application differs from the currently operating programme (as described on the website). This led to confusion in the preparatory study of the materials.

Moreover, it was not mentioned that the conventional Educational Psychology programme was not running already for three years, and that the students are enrolled only in the DL programme.

The preparation of the onsite visit, however, was very good. Presentations were attractive and concise, leaving enough room for discussion. The EEC appreciates the very open and constructive atmosphere in which the exchange and discussions took place and the high receptiveness to feedback.

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>Patricia BIJTTEBIER</b>	academic member + chair	KU Leuven
<b>Paul A BARTOLO</b>	academic member	L-Università ta' Malta
<b>Teresa GUASCH PASCUAL</b>	academic member	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
<b>Anthoulla PAPAGEORGIOU</b>	registered educational/school psychologist	-
<b>Andreas SAVVA</b>	student member	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

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

### 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.*

## Findings

### **1.1 Policy for Quality Assurance**

The process and guidelines of the introduction of new programmes at the University of Nicosia are in line with the Bologna Process Declaration and, more specifically, with the Tuning Methodology in Developing and Evaluation Programmes. There is an established procedure for introducing a new programme. After a new programme is approved by the Council, the dean of the school is responsible for providing to the vice rector for academic affairs (as chair of the University Internal Quality Assurance Committee) the documents needed for submission of the programme to the Cyprus Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency. Two years after accreditation of a programme by the Cyprus Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (DIPAE), an Internal Programme Evaluation Process (IPEP) is started. The IPEP is a two-year process, completed one year before the five-year DIPAE of the accreditation of the programme expires, which is within the timeframe for submitting the programme for re-accreditation.

As to ethical review procedures, ethical review committees are established at different levels: departmental level, level of the university and national level.

### **1.2 Design, Approval, On-Going Monitoring and Review**

The programme consists of 150 ECTS (2.5 years of study) and it is delivered in Greek. Up till now, the first three semesters of the programme were largely overlapping with the 90 ECTS programme of the Master of Science in Educational Psychology (9x10 ECTS); the last two semesters comprised courses on Counseling in the School Context and Professional Ethics (10 ECTS each) as well as Practicum Seminars and Practicum I and II (40 ECTS together). The programme was developed by a committee comprised of the faculty of the Department of Social Sciences with many years of experience in programme development and accreditation procedures. During the development of the programme, the committee studied the educational guidelines and requirements of organisations of school psychology (International School Psychology Association and National Association of School Psychology (US)). The programme was approved by the Senate and the University Council, and received accreditation by the Evaluation Committee of Private Universities (ECPU) in 2013.



The programme under evaluation is a proposed revision of the curriculum, with courses of 7.5 ECTS (instead of 10 ECTS). Compulsory courses (13x7.5 ECTS) cover the areas of Psychology of Teaching and Learning; Intellectual Development; Learning Disabilities; Research Methods and Statistics I and II; Educational Interventions; Child Psychopathology; *Analysis, Assessment and Modification of Behavior*; Testing and Psychological Assessment; *Psychological Interventions and Programme Evaluation*; Professional Ethics; Child and Adolescent Assessment; and Counseling Psychology in the School Context (courses in *italic* are courses on new topics in the programme). Also compulsory are Practicum Seminar I and II and Practicum I and II (37.5 ECTS together). Elective courses cover the areas of Neuroscience in Education and Contemporary Issues in School Psychology. They can be replaced by Thesis I and II. Surprisingly, the newly proposed programme has similar (if not identical) course descriptions as those in the MSc in Educational Psychology (Conventional and Distance Learning), with only a change in the course code and the ECTS weightings of 10 ECTS vs 7.5 ECTS. The EEC was told that the difference will be made up by the different assignments required.

### 1.3 Public Information

The University of Nicosia website provides information on different aspects of the program: the profile, admission, assessment, learning outcomes, academic path, semester breakdown, faculty and adjunct faculty profiles, career prospects and graduation criteria. Prospective applicants can click on relevant links to access details of individual courses. Only part of the information on the website is available in English.

### 1.4 Information Management

During the visit, the EEC was presented with relevant information about the number of applications, admissions, registrations, drop-outs and graduates as well as on graduate employment.

## Strengths

- The University of Nicosia has established quality assurance procedures and each programme is reviewed periodically. The fact that ethical review committees and procedures are in place at different levels is efficient, making it possible to readily proceed with setting up studies in straightforward cases, whereas ensuring in depth consideration of more complex or sensitive cases. The Department of Social Sciences played an active role in setting up this.
- The attempt to develop a more specific curriculum for the MSc in School Psychology is a plus, especially because the new courses as indicated above provide trainees with more preparation in professional skills such as for intervention at classroom level and behaviour management.
- Staff profiles on the University of Nicosia website are clear and include a brief CV, which is useful for prospective students.

## Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The fact that the newly proposed programme has similar course descriptions as those in the MSc in Educational Psychology (Conventional and Distance Learning) is undesirable. Content as well as assessment activities for the two groups should be differentiated, as the programmes target different groups of students.
- In the research methods course(s), the predominant focus is on quantitative research methods and statistics. The EEC recommends to restore the balance and add content on qualitative research methods (e.g.,

thematic analysis, discourse analysis, ethnographic approaches, grounded theory, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, narrative approaches), as well as use of qualitative analysis software (Nvivo).

- The EEC is of the view that having a master's thesis as compulsory part of a MSc programme is indispensable to meet international standards. The EEC thinks it is undesirable to graduate from a MSc without having conducted a substantial independent piece of research work. The EEC strongly recommends the programme teams to reconsider this matter. Also, the EEC recommends to increase flexibility in the format of master's theses, e.g., possibility to write the thesis in the format of a publishable paper (i.e. length can be less than 40 pages; language can be English).
- There is a need for less focus on categorial and sometimes outdated diagnostic labelling of child disorders (e.g., terms no longer used, such as Pervasive Developmental Disorder) and more consideration of assessments of strengths and areas for growth both within the child and within the family and educational contexts in terms of barriers to learning.
- Along similar lines of the understanding of the impact of educational structures on children's learning and development, there is a need for the addition of the course on inclusive education to the (compulsory part of the) programme.
- There should be a stronger link of the theoretical content to the practice of school psychology. The lack of this link is evident in the apparent compartmentalisation of similar issues in three courses. The courses on Teaching and Learning, on Intellectual Development, and on Testing and Psychometric Assessment all address intellectual development from different viewpoints, but none of them seems to focus on the challenges experienced by children in the school context. The same is true for the two courses on learning disabilities and child psychopathology.
- The courses Research Methods and Statistics I and Research Methods and Statistics II are responsible for the cultivation of the scientist part of the "Scientist-Practitioner" identity of the school psychologist. The lack of an emphasis on qualitative methodology is apparent. But also in terms of the quantitative aspects of the course, we noticed the lack of exposure to non-frequentist approaches (i.e. Bayesian methods) and conceptualizations of research versus the traditional hypothesis testing. In a strictly descriptive sense, based on the course literature, the courses are emphasizing familiarity with the usage of statistical software as the starting point out of which any form of familiarity or intuition with the relevant vocabulary and terminology will eventually stem. We urge the reconsideration of this approach, vis-a-vis placing the emphasis on intuition and understanding of the methods and their meaning. Critically, there is a certain level of intuition and literacy that is gained only by "doing" statistics. Statistics, as mathematics, is a subject whose mastery is gained only when practiced. While the two aforementioned courses could provide fertile ground for much of the desired knowledge base to be built, we highlight the role of the thesis precisely under the prism of "doing statistics". Particularly when contrasted with the practicum and the role it plays for the development for the practitioner in the Scientist-Practitioner identity, the thesis, and the manifestation of scientific praxis in the form of research gains even more weight.
- At the University of Nicosia website, the programmes Educational Psychology (conventional) and School Psychology are in the same tab in the list of master degrees, which can create confusion. Also in some of the aspects mentioned above, it is not clear which information refers to which programme.
- It is confusing that some of the pages of the English website of the University of Nicosia are just in Greek. It might be better to indicate that English is not available (e.g., for Greek-language programmes). Apart from information on Greek-language programmes, it is recommendable to make sure all information is available in both Greek and English.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

### Sub-areas

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

**2.2 Practical training**

**2.3 Student assessment**

### **2.1 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.*

## Findings

### **2.1 Process of Teaching and Learning and Student-Centred Teaching Methodology**

The course descriptions mention a variety of teaching methodologies such as interactive lectures, in-class group work, in-class discussions.

The university has a pedagogical model defined that enhances an approach based on learning through interaction. The materials and tools are adjusted to this approach through discussions, and formative and summative assessments. In general, the pedagogical approach encourages students to take an active role and the activities are designed with this purpose.

The methodological approach is defined as student-centred and students are encouraged to be active participants in the learning process for the course, although this needs to be strengthened as will be pointed out later.

The teaching methods, tools and material used are oriented to provide support to the students in their learning process, and respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs.

### **2.2 Practical Training**

The programme is aimed at enabling trainees to develop the professional identity and competencies required for practicing as a school psychologist. While preparations regarding practice are raised during the taught courses (e.g., on assessment of intelligence), the actual practicum placement takes place in the 4th and 5th semesters. It consists of at least 1000 hours of supervised practice as required for registration in the Register of Professional Psychologists and for obtaining a Professional License as a Psychologist.

The practicum is organised for each trainee by a practicum coordinator for the programme who works within KESY (the wellbeing centre of the university that serves both university students as well as clients from the community). It is organised in two stages and periods, named Practicum I (12.5 ECTS) and Practicum II (20 ECTS), entailing placement in at least three sites accompanied by two practicum seminars each of 2.5 ECTS. Before the start of the Practicum there is an oral assessment of the readiness of the trainee to undertake the practicum. This is followed by observation and shadowing of psychologists at KESY, accompanied by a practicum seminar that prepares the

trainees regarding case conceptualisation and professional skills for working with clients and their contexts. Trainees are then given cases for them to do assessments and interventions. They are provided with 30 minutes of supervision for each 1 hour of engagement with clients.

Practicum II in the fifth semester consists of placements in at least two different sites - schools and/or community psychological services. Trainees are required to be engaged with at least 20 cases, and involve at least 10 assessments and two workshops, and are expected to be engaged with different client age groups and conditions.

### 2.3 Student Assessment

Students' evaluation in a course can vary into 50%-70% of activities during the course, and 30-50% final examination. Students need to do the assignments and the exam to pass the course. There are clear actions to prevent plagiarism. Final exams are mainly multiple choice questions and an open question, and there is no feedback provided at the end. The assessment criteria are shared with the students in advance, but not the evaluation forms.

#### Strengths

- The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development. There is potential for the students to grow as individuals as a result of the course.
- The process of teaching and learning is flexible. A great deal of consideration has been given to modes of delivery, taking account of work and personal circumstances of the students.
- The practicum is one of the stronger elements of the MSc:
  - There is an initial evaluation of the trainee's readiness for practice.
  - There is a focus on the trainees' development of a professional identity, with a strong recommendation and funding for them to complete 20 hours of personal therapy.
  - There is constant monitoring and supervision of the individual trainee's activities and engagement from both field and KESY-based qualified psychologists as well as the practicum coordinator. There is also self-evaluation by the trainee; and there is an evaluation by the trainee of the adequacy of the placement context for future reference; trainees have to produce a portfolio with an account of their clinical work together with relevant reflections on their professional development.
  - There is a gradual introduction of trainees to practice: first through practical assignments in the taught courses, then through the more contained context of KESY, and then in schools and the wider community.
  - Trainees are also offered the possibility of completing a further 500 hours of supervised placement if they wish to meet also the criteria for Euro Psy certification.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The EEC recommends implementing a more authentic assessment approach to guarantee the interconnection between theory and practice (e.g., the use of case studies as it is described in some of the courses).
- The high value of the final exam focuses the student to memorise the information for the exam. If a robust continuous assessment is designed to guide the student to solve complex problems during the course (i.e. authentic assessment, based on project based learning, case studies ...), with significant weighting, the EEC strongly recommends decreasing the weight of the final exam, to orient the student to the learning process.

- The EEC also suggests providing feedback at the end of the final exam in order to enable student growth, particularly due to the weighting of the exam.
- The EEC recommends sharing the assessment criteria/assessment forms with the students before the exams.
- The start of the Practicum in the fourth semester is rather late in view of ensuring a stronger link between theory and practice. Trainees may start their observation and shadowing of psychologists at least from the beginning of semester 3 if not earlier. Though we were informed that there is already some application of theory to practical exercises in the taught courses, this was not so evident in the course descriptions which have a particularly strong emphasis on knowledge through examinations (that carry about 50% of the weighting) rather than concern with how theoretical concepts could be applied to psychological practice.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Partially compliant



### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

#### **Sub-areas**

#### **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**

#### **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**

#### **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

#### **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**

##### **Standards**

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *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.*

## Findings

### **3.1 Teaching Staff Recruitment and Development**

All clinical supervisors are licensed school psychologists in the Republic of Cyprus. All have a minimum of professional experience of 5 years post-graduation in various settings and a variety of theoretical perspectives: systemic, CBT, ACT, behavioural.

The university has the Faculty Training and Development Unit (FTDU), an umbrella unit that coordinates all faculty training and support activities. This unit offers teacher development training seminars to Faculty members on Teaching and Learning Theory and Practice (12-week training). All new faculty members have to attend a seminar.

### **3.2 Teaching Staff Number and Status**

The programme is supported by 10 faculty members (4 professors, 2 associate professors, 2 assistant professors, 1 adjunct lecturer and 1 practicum coordinator) and 7 clinical supervisors. Many faculty members have had academic and/or clinical qualifications from different countries and experience of working in other universities. Clinical supervisors are licensed school psychologists in the Republic of Cyprus with a minimum of professional experience of 5 years post-graduation in various settings. They represent a variety of theoretical perspectives: systemic, CBT, ACT, behavioural).

### **3.3 Synergies of Teaching and Research**

Staff indicates that time for research is extremely limited, due to both high teaching and administrative load.

It is the EEC's understanding that the prevailing methodological approach to research at the department is a quantitative approach, which is also reflected in a predominant focus on quantitative research methods in the methodology courses.

## Strengths

- Student/staff ratio is adequate.
- Teaching staff are very engaged and show clear ownership over the programmes they support. They are very responsive to students' needs, which is highly valued by students.
- There is a clear ambition to develop the department's research activities further and to stimulate staff to engage in research, as evidenced by the financial rewards for those who publish articles as well as reduction of teaching load (Research Time Release hours) for those engaged in research projects.

## Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Faculty feel that there is a need for more support for continuous professional development. The University should enable and encourage staff to participate in continued professional development activities to keep up to date with current developments in their area of expertise.
- High current teaching load has a negative impact on staff research opportunities. In light of this, the EEC recommends considering - for the implementation of the proposed differentiation between the (conventional) Educational Psychology programme and the School Psychology programme - scenarios that keep teaching load within limits. Possible suggestions in this respect are to discontinue the delivery of the conventional Educational Psychology programme (if legislation permits) or - in case the conventional Educational Psychology programme is retained - to combine the student groups of both conventional tracks in one and the same course group for some courses where it is possible to address the needs of both target groups (and even create added value). Past students reported that they benefited greatly when such a combination of groups fostered a more interdisciplinary exchange between educational psychology and school psychology students.
- Although the university, school and department are rightly proud of their recent climb in international research standing, the EEC feels that this is not sufficiently reflected in a well thought of strategy for the further development of the research dimension and its implementation in the (master) programmes.
- It would be valuable to enhance methodological diversity by building capacity in qualitative research methods at the department. This will enable the programmes to increase the focus on qualitative approaches in the methodological courses. It is critical that the teacher of the course is an expert in that subject. This is fundamental here, particularly since the research methods courses are the only courses in which the students are exposed in some depth to questions pertaining to methodology. If it is the case that the purpose of the course is for the students to maximise the extraction of information from the literature, then the teacher should be intimately familiar with both the qualitative as well as the quantitative aspects of the relevant literature of the fields. The greatest risk of having non-experts teach these courses is the additional amount of knowledge the teacher must be able to keep up with, as statistics and other methodologies – as every area – enjoys frequent evolutions and change of trends in the literature. Thus, if the teacher does not manage to keep up to date, then the risk of relying on increasingly outdated tools and methods arises. A reconsideration of qualitative methods is particularly important for the School Psychology trainees as their professional work - synthesising findings from observation, interview and assessment data into one report - consists very often of qualitative analysis and synthesis.

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

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

### Findings

#### **4.1 Student Admission**

To apply for admission to the programme, candidates should fulfil the following minimum entry criteria: (a) Bachelor's degree in Psychology from a recognised university with a minimum cumulative point average of 3.0, a Second Class Upper Division Honours (British degrees) or 6.5/Very Good (Greek degrees) and (b) proficiency in the English Language (university degree completed in English, TOEFL score of 550 paper-based or 213 computer-based; GCSE O-Level grade of C or higher; IELTS score of 6.5 or higher; or the University of Nicosia Placement Test score at the ENGL-100 level. Candidates who meet the above criteria are evaluated on the basis of academic record, research experience, clinical experience, personal statement, other postgraduate qualifications and references. Competitive candidates are invited for a personal interview. The maximum number of students to be admitted annually is 15.

#### **4.2 Student Progression**

Pre-defined regulations regarding student progression are in place and clearly described in the Student Handbook. The low student/staff ratio makes it possible to keep track of every student's trajectory very closely and develop tailor-made solutions to any problems that may arise along the way, if needed. The complete record of a student's progress is issued at the Registrar's Office in the form of a transcript.

At the end of the third semester of study, students are evaluated as to their readiness for admission to the practicum. Towards this end, an interview is conducted by a three-member committee, consisting of the academic coordinator of the programme, the practicum coordinator and an external professional psychologist.

#### **4.3 Student Recognition**

Students who have completed courses of similar content at a Higher Education Institution as part of an equivalent level degree (i.e. Master's level) may be given an exemption for those courses, as recognition of prior learning. The maximum number of possible credits to be exempt is 1/3 of the programme (i.e. 50 ECTS).

#### **4.4 Student Certification**

There is a description of the certification process. Institutional documentation is typically in the form of a degree or diploma, certificate of advanced graduate studies, transcript notation indicating programme completion, or similar official documentation of completion of the entire program.

### Strengths

- Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification are in place. Processes and criteria are implemented consistently.
- The Practicum Readiness Exam ensures that students are ready to proceed to this stage of their training.
- The Professional Readiness Exam ensures that the trainee is competent and ready to function as an independent professional school psychologist.
- There is a description of the certification process in terms of the number of practicum hours (i.e. 1020 hours of supervised practice) for the registration as professional school psychologist on the Cyprus Register of Psychologists as well as for the optional top-up (towards 1500 hours) for the EuroPsy accreditation. All trainees who completed the degree have been registered and are practicing as school psychologists.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- It is not clear if the personal interview at the admission stage is sufficient to pick up any serious difficulties for an applicant to proceed to the professional practice levels. There should be a procedure for informing any student of such difficulties, at least within the first year of the programme.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

## 5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

### **Sub-areas**

#### **5.1 Teaching and Learning resources**

#### **5.2 Physical resources**

#### **5.3 Human support resources**

#### **5.4 Student support**

### **5.1 Teaching and Learning resources**

#### **Standards**

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

### **5.2 Physical resources**

#### **Standards**

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

### **5.3 Human support resources**

#### **Standards**

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

## 5.4 Student support

### Standards

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

### Findings

#### 5.1 Teaching and Learning Resources

There are adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environment, materials, aids and equipment). The emphasis on digital resources is appropriate for both online and face-to-face programmes. However, some of the readings detailed in the course descriptions are not updated.

The library services guarantee excellent access to the international literature and the training and resources needed.

#### 5.2 Physical Resources

The University of Nicosia's infrastructure comprises of 20 buildings, housing state-of-the-art teaching/learning spaces, to accommodate modern teaching and learning methods, fully equipped laboratories and one of the largest libraries in Cyprus.

The Center for Therapy, Training and Research (KESY) functions as a community mental health clinic, a clinical practicum training site and a research centre for the Department of Social Sciences. During the EEC visit to KESY, it was evident that the facility has adequate space, facilities and coordination staff for its three functions and is a very effective resource for the School Psychology trainees.

#### 5.3 Human Support Resources

Support services appear to be adequately staffed, and the students we met did not raise any concerns.

#### 5.4 Student Support

The programme covers the needs of a diverse student population. In addition to individualised support from faculty, the University has a Student Success Centre (SSC) which considers any requests for access arrangements for students to achieve their academic goals. Such arrangements include enabling students to take up a programme on a part time basis as well as to have adjustments, such as extra time in examinations because of special needs.



Interaction between students is planned through the courses and students confirmed it.

There is also an individualised approach in all the programmes. Students stressed the availability of academic staff support and also of other services.

### Strengths

- The university's infrastructure is fit for purpose.
- The space, facilities and coordination staff of the Center for Therapy, Training and Research (KESY) are a great resource for trainees. The centre works as a practice HUB for school psychology trainees both in their initial training and during their placements in schools and community services.
- The library has extensive e-learning resources available for all programmes, and also it has agreements with different libraries across the country and Greece for access to resources not available in the university library.
- Students in this programme, being a smaller group (not more than 15 and in the latest cohort only 8) are given substantial individual support in all courses and particularly during their practicum.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The EEC strongly recommends reviewing the main texts/readings of each course to ensure updated references - in at least one course, all recommended readings are older than 10 years.

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

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



## D. Conclusions and Final Remarks

Overall, the EEC finds that the MSc in School Psychology is fulfilling its mission to prepare its students for achieving the competences and requirements to register and work as Licensed School Psychologists in Cyprus. This has already been achieved by all students who completed the degree so far. Moreover, Faculty has proposed to us a revised programme with more input related to the practical skills required by school psychologists. The EEC thinks this is a valuable reform, which will further enhance the achievement of these goals.

The EEC found that students are provided with effective individualised support throughout the programme and more especially in the practicum. This is a clear strength of the programme and its delivery.

At the same time it is suggested that the occasion of a revised programme should be used to ensure, even in the course descriptions, a clearer indication of the importance of contextual factors as well as within-child strengths and difficulties, and of the link between theory and practice both in the content of the course as well as in the assessment methods adopted. With regards to the latter, the EEC recommends that faculty reconsider the assessment methods to ensure that assessment is related to the learning outcomes and to the competences required of school psychologists.

Another area for improvement is the need to ensure that students are provided with a good basis of research literacy and skills in qualitative as well as in quantitative methodologies. Related to this, within the scientist-practitioner model for School Psychology, the EEC suggests that the thesis should become a compulsory component of the revised course to ensure the development of independent research skills.



## E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Patricia BIJTTEBIER	
Paul A BARTOLO	
Teresa GUASCH PASCUAL	
Anthoulla PAPAGEORGIOU	
Andreas SAVVA	

**Date:** 09/12/2022