

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 09/12/2022

# External Evaluation Report (E-learning 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 Εκπαιδευτική  
Ψυχολογία - Εξ Αποστάσεως

## In English:

Master of Science in Educational Psychology –  
Distance Learning

- **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.

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

## 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 90 ECTS (1.5 years of study), of which 60 ECTS are compulsory courses (10 ECTS each) and 30 ECTS elective courses (10 ECTS each). It is delivered in Greek. Compulsory courses cover the areas of Psychology of Teaching and Learning; Intellectual Development; Learning Disabilities; Educational Interventions; Testing and Psychometric Assessment; and Research Methods. Elective courses cover the areas of Inclusive Education; Child Psychopathology; Child and Adolescent Assessment; and Neuroscience in Education. Students have the option to replace two electives by a master's thesis (2x10 ECTS). 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. The programme was approved by the Senate and the University Council, and received accreditation by the Evaluation Committee of Private Universities (ECPU) in 2013.

### 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 differentiate the curricula of MSc in School Psychology and MSc in Educational Psychology is to be recommended.
- 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 School Psychology 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 60 pages; language can be English).
- The curriculum for the programme in Educational Psychology is too much focused on issues that are applicable to the practice of school psychology such as 'Testing and Psychometric Assessment' rather than on "assessment for and of learning" with considerations of the importance of formative assessment in education as well as the validity and equitability of the system of national and other examinations.
- The EEC recommends that 'Inclusive Education' should become a compulsory course in the programme (rather than an elective).
- The EEC recommends to add a course on socio-emotional development and education.
- In a strictly normative sense, the purpose of the Research Methods course should be to address (a) research designs, (b) qualitative methodologies and tools and (c) quantitative methodologies and tools. These three separate considerations should be viewed under a unified perspective, i.e., the unified purpose of giving the student a substantial literacy and familiarity with the relevant terminology pertaining to the three areas. Fundamentally, the intent of this course should be to amplify the student's ability to extract the maximum amount of information from the relevant scientific literature in the field. The ability to understand scientific literature and to critically evaluate axiomatically necessitates a certain level of fluency with statistical terminology, and it is precisely here that the course could turn into an asset for the students. Of course, there is a certain level of literacy and familiarity that is only achieved when producing research. This is currently emphasised in the course descriptions too as the Thesis I and Thesis II courses explicitly mention that they build on the skills learned in the Research Methods course. Therefore, while the Research Methods course is there to provide the "scientific vocabulary" for the student, it is in the Thesis I & II courses that this vocabulary is manifested as actual "scientific literacy". A reorganization of the Research Methods course could perhaps equally emphasise research designs, qualitative and quantitative methods. Any statistical software could be used to demonstrate examples of summarization statistics or other simple forms of regression but again, the aim should be to cultivate familiarity and a certain sense of intuition.
- It is confusing that some of the pages of the English website of the University of Nicosia are 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**

**2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities**

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

#### Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - *among students*
  - *between students and teaching staff*
  - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the e-learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

### **2.2 Practical training**

#### Standards

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

## 2.3 Student assessment

### Standards

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

## 2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

### Standards

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

### Findings

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

The course descriptions mention a variety of teaching methodologies such as lectures, experiential workshops, individual and group work, individual coaching, case study analysis, student presentations, and videos. There is a balance between videoconferences for presentations (non-compulsory) and discussion sessions to promote students' interaction.

The university has a pedagogical model defined that enhances an approach based on learning through interaction (there is a distance learning guideline shared with the community). The materials and tools are adjusted to this approach through chats, forum discussions, WebEx sessions 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-centered 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

Non applicable

## 2.3 Student Assessment

Students' evaluation in a course is distributed into 40% of activities during the course, and 60% 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.

## 2.4. Study Guides

The committee could review one study guide of a course. It includes clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner. Course material is also presented, and the activities and bibliographic references and suggestions for further study, although the methodology and the assessment was not very much detailed.

## 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.
- There is a defined pedagogical model and specific distance learning guidelines, with a strong emphasis on learning through interaction.
- Students' learning is monitored during the whole course (through assignments, synchronous videoconferences...).
- The students' group size (30 students per group for the DL) is adjusted to offer intensive support for learners, both at an individual and cohort level.
- A variety of teaching strategies are used to support asynchronous and synchronous students' interaction through videoconferences, teamwork, in order to promote discussions and share feedback.

### 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 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.

**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	Not applicable
2.3	Student assessment	Partially compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Compliant

### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

#### **Sub-areas**

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

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

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

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

##### **Standards**

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

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

##### **Standards**

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

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

##### **Standards**

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*



- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

## Findings

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

During recruitment of faculty members for Distance Learning programmes, candidates are required to possess a certain level of ICT skills depending on the type of course and specific programme requirements when applicable. The LMS Programme Management team, a sub-unit of the DL unit, organises regular Moodle training sessions ("Moodle Essential") in order to assist lecturers in understanding the course design features of Moodle and be able to design and develop their online courses. Faculty can also arrange individual meetings (face-to-face or online) with the LMS Programme Management team for more specific training, such as for preparing and recording video or audio presentations for the DL course. Relevant handbooks have been created which provide extensive guidelines to lecturers.

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 8 faculty members (4 professors, 1 assistant professor and 11 adjunct lecturers). Many have had academic and/or clinical qualifications from different countries and experience of working in other universities.

### **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 felt that there was 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. 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 to 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 rises.

**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, Education or a cognate area 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, teaching and research 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 120 for the distance learning programme.

### **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.

### **4.3 Student Recognition**

It is established that the 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. 30 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.

## Areas of improvement and recommendations

- There is a need for a more clear indication of the pathways for Educational Psychology vs School Psychology. 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, it is not clear which information refers to which 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

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

### 5.2 Physical resources

#### Standards

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

### 5.3 Human support resources

#### Standards

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

### 5.4 Student support

#### Standards

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

#### Findings

##### 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.

There is a Distance Learning Unit in place with several activities around design, study material, learning activities, assessment as well as training for teachers with a student-centred approach. The Distance Learning Unit is under the umbrella of the Faculty training and development unit, and from the presentations and discussions we had, the EEC can confirm that there is a clear interconnection between the units to guarantee support for both students and academic staff.

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.

##### 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.

The courses seem to have numerous activities, but it is not clear that there is a balance between theoretical and practical assignments. Interaction between students is planned though 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 Distance Learning Unit provides student and academic staff with adequate support.
- The library has extensive e-learning resources available for all programmes, and also it has agreements with different libraries across the country and in Greece for access to resources not available in the library.
- Student support during the programme through the services and facilities and specially from the academic staff.

### 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>
<b>5.1</b>	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
<b>5.2</b>	Physical resources	Compliant
<b>5.3</b>	Human support resources	Compliant
<b>5.4</b>	Student support	Compliant

## D. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC finds that the MSc in Educational Psychology, distance learning, can fulfil its mission to provide students, coming from a variety of backgrounds, with an enhanced understanding of the psychology of human development and learning and education. Graduate and current students confirmed the relevance of their course experience.

While keeping the conventional programme as a legal requirement, the EEC recommends focusing the University resources on the improvement and enhancement of the methodology of the DL programme. Such a focus on one mode (DL) may also contribute to addressing academic staff work load issues.

The EEC finds that the course curriculum provides an attractive sample of the psychological contributions to the understanding of human development and learning. It recommends, however, that the strongly individual psychological approach to human development and educational issues that dominates the curriculum, should be balanced with a concurrent systemic approach.

The programme should ensure that it also represents all the major areas in its compulsory courses by revising some of the more psychological-practice oriented content – such as on psychometric testing – with content that addresses wider issues for education such as formative and summative assessment, socio-emotional development and learning, and inclusive education.

The EEC also strongly recommends that faculty reconsider the assessment methods to ensure that assessment is related to the learning outcomes and to the competences relevant to the students' careers.

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. The EEC suggests that the thesis should become a compulsory component of the revised course to ensure the development of an evidence-based, transformative approach to educational issues while also enabling the development of independent skills at master's level.



## 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