Doc. 300.1.1/4

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report

(Joint - E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  University of Nicosia
- **Collaborative Institution(s):**
  University of Patras
- **Town:** Nicosia

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

- **Department/ Sector:** Languages and Literature/Philology

- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
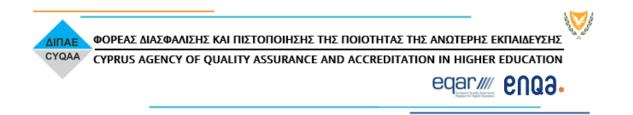
  In Greek:

  Διδασκαλία της Ελληνικής ως Δεύτερης/ Ξένης Γλώσσας (1,5 έτη/ 90 ECTS, Μάστερ, Εξ Αποστάσεως, Διαπανεπιστημιακό πρόγραμμα σπουδών με το Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών)
  In English:

  Teaching Greek to Speakers of Other Languages (1,5 years/90 ECTS, Master of Arts, E-Learning, Joint programme with the University of Patras)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
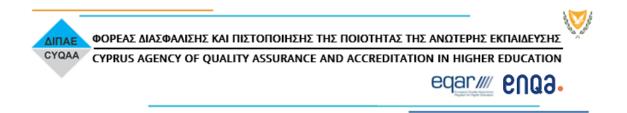 **In English:** Concentrations

A. Introduction
This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

Following the invitation by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) had the opportunity to evaluate the proposed joint Master's programme on Teaching Greek to Speakers of Other Languages offered by the Nicosia University and University of Patras. The EEC consisted of four academics (Prof. Eleni Griva, Prof. Ianthi Maria Tsimpli, Prof. Alicia Morales Ortiz, Prof. Santi Caballe) and a student representative (Mr. Michalis Stylianos Stavrou). The EEC was provided with all the detailed documentation before the meeting, along with links to samples of asynchronous classes. The Chair solicited questions from the committee members before the visit (18/3/2024) and compiled an indicative set of questions to ask the various groups. Christiana Maki from CYQAA had sent us detailed information about the procedure for the visit.

The onsite visit for the evaluation for the program took place in Nicosia University on 27th March 2024. On the day of the visit, the EEC met with the senior management team, academic faculty responsible for designing the Master's Programme in Teaching Greek to Speakers of Other Languages, administrative and other support staff, and students. In particular, during the visit, the EEC met: the Rector Prof. Philippos Pouyioutas, the Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prof. Klimis Mastoridis, the Member of Quality Assurance of Nicosia University Prof. Paschalis Paschali, the Head of the Department of Languages and Literature, Prof. Polina Mackay, the Programme coordinator, Dr Georgios Georgiou, the Representative of the University of Patras, Prof. George Xydopoulos, the Senior Officer, Office of the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, Mr Kyriakos Georgiou and the Officer from the Office of the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, Mr Lakis Agathokleous.

In the morning sessions, the senior management team of UNIC and the University of Patras presented the institution as well as the Master's Programme in Teaching Greek to Speakers of Other Languages under review/evaluation. In the following session, the EEC met members of the teaching staff. Then, in the last sessions, the EEC met with former UNIC students who attended the previous course on TGSOL (to be discontinued). These graduates shared their experiences and this was followed by a meeting with members of the administrative team. After the presentations in each session, the EEC had the opportunity to ask questions and collect further information. More specifically, the EEC asked questions related to the program (its structure, delivery, assessments of learning, quality of learning, and IT support, etc.) and the institution more broadly. Additional evidence was also provided (information about support for students with difficulties or disabilities, career orientation that is offered, etc.) as requested.
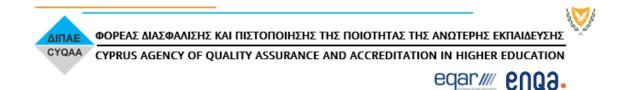
The visit concluded with a meeting and an exit discussion with the senior management team and the programme coordinator for clarification questions arising from earlier sessions during the visit. The EEC members found the discussions to be fruitful and informative.

The EEC would like to thank all parties involved for their cooperation and support during the evaluation process. The EEC would also like to express their thanks and appreciation to Ms Christiana Maki, the CYQAA coordinator, for her efficient way of managing the process.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Eleni Griva	Chair	Professor, University of Western Macedonia
Ianthi Maria Tsimpli	Member	Professor, University of Cambridge
Alicia Morales Ortiz	Member	Associate Professor, University of Murcia
Santi Caballe	E-learning Expert	Professor, Open University of Catalonia
Michalis Stylianos Stavrou	Student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

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

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

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

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

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

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
    - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
    - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
    - *benefits from external expertise*
    - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
    - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
    - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
    - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
    - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
    - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*

- *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
    - *selection criteria*
    - *intended learning outcomes*
    - *qualification awarded*
    - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
    - *pass rates*
    - *learning opportunities available to the students*
    - *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

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

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

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You may also consider the following questions:

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

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

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The procedures for quality assurance are sound. The programme is overall well-designed and coherent, with clear aims and objectives which reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe. In addition, the semester structure is clearly specified ensuring smooth transitions. Students follow mandatory courses and can choose from a range of elective courses. Course content is monitored internally and externally. Public information about the programmes is clearly presented and available. The programme's information is effectively managed. Finally, the DL management of the course is based on good knowledge and practices in UNIC.

The provision of theoretical and descriptive linguistics modules as part of the programme on TGSOL provides the necessary background for a more informed approach to understanding issues in language teaching. The theoretical part of the course is supplemented by more practical modules in terms of research methodology and classroom practice.

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

- The policies for quality assurance concerning the study programme, design and development are well-documented.
- The course is monitored internally and externally according to international standards.
- The course is to be continually evaluated and updated where needed.
- Student feedback is taken seriously and is acted upon at different levels.
- There is clear information about student career pathways (primary or secondary education).
- The proposed programme benefits from previous experience in the field of TGSOL.
- The proposed joint programme enjoys close collaboration between UNIC and the University of Patras.

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

Theory and practice could achieve even better balance, including:
- a stronger component on Greek language assessment
- a clearly defined component in each of the theory modules relating theory and practice of TGSOL
- a focus on skill development in TGSOL, namely Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing
- An obligatory research thesis or dissertation seems to be the norm in many other European institutions, even if it is not an absolute requirement; this may be especially important for students wishing to pursue further studies at the PhD level. As the programme stands, it is not clear how the workload for a thesis could be replaced by the workload two elective modules.
- Coherence between modules could be improved: the content of theory modules could include a component clearly outlined in the week-by-week description of the topics covered, which would establish the link between the content of the module and the applied linguistic/teaching methodology aspect of the course.
- As it is a Joint Master's Programme, it is essential that there is close cooperation between the two partner Universities in the development, evaluation and improvement of the modules offered. We also recommend that extensive performance evaluation is in place that provides information on the quality of the programme.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Not applicable
1.4	Information management	Not applicable

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

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

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

Findings

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

The process of teaching and learning is flexible and student-centred. A set of core courses is mixed with a variety of elective courses and students are expected to proceed as autonomous learners within their individual programme of studies.

The joint programme is compatible for distance learning (DL) delivery, and the methodology provided aligns with this specific course of study. External and voluntary accreditations, such as QS Stars and EFQUEL/UNIQUe, evaluate the university's DL quality assurance.

The supporting learning management system (LMS), a Moodle 4 installation, effectively supports online teaching, learning and administrative tasks. It offers essential services for online teaching and learning, including both synchronous (via Webex) and asynchronous tools like discussion forums and wikis, facilitating interaction with instructors, peers, and materials. The system also includes e-assessment tools, such as quizzes with immediate feedback, for self-assessment of understanding.

Teacher-student and student-student interactions primarily occur through synchronous teleconferences. Each course offers at least 9 teleconference sessions, ensuring sufficient live interaction hours. Recorded sessions accommodate students unable to attend in real time and video lectures feature the instructor for the benefit of non-verbal communication. Project-based learning activities in small teams, structured and guided by the instructor, encourage student collaboration. In addition, chat tools support daily teacher-student and student-student interactions.

Formative assessments through essays and reports (coursework), including personalized feedback during the course, account for up to 40% of the final grade. Summative assessments through a mandatory online final exam (supported by Proctoring) constitute up to 60% of the final grade. Weekly online quiz-based assignments and optional self-assessment activities in study guides help students evaluate their knowledge and skills. The assessment scheme is sufficiently outlined for each course.

Strengths

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

Continual DL quality assurance evaluation by non-mandatory external accreditation organizations is considered best practice by the EEC. The DL model meets the specific needs of both full- and part-time online students with professional and family duties, requiring efficient and timely learning. The EEC would like to note that students generally benefit from a very good student-teacher ratio (1/30) and graduate student feedback from the previously-run programme is very positive.

Despite the fact that the EEC was not presented with rubrics, rubric-based and personalized feedback in interactive activities and during teleconference sessions are considered best practices. The EEC appreciates the encouraged collaboration among students fostered by project-based activities and online team discussions. Detailed study guides allowing students to plan weekly tasks are also highlighted as best practices. The collaborating universities are encouraged to maintain while reinforcing these DL model elements.

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

- The EEC would like more information on how grading and assessment are carried out for the optional thesis compared to the different modules (one or two assessors; how is final grade agreed etc).
- Relations with alumni can be more streamlined and a track record of future steps of graduates can be established.
- Documentation and meeting information did not clarify the use of gamification strategies to enhance student motivation and engagement in the e-assessment process. The EEC also suggests adopting advanced feedback forms, such as intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents, for immediate and automatic feedback, facilitating student progress and self-evaluation.
- The EEC points out potential issues with online synchronous teleconferences and teamworks if the programme expands internationally, given the challenges of coordinating across diverse time zones. The universities' support for this collaboration type and the recommendation for adapting the DL model to increase asynchronous online interaction and collaboration were unclear.
- Based on the study guide samples, the EEC recommends that the Institution could offer more detailed guidance for online students (all students in the proposed joint programme), including a detailed learning and assessment methodology. Moreover, the EEC recommends providing clear indications of the relevant parts of the entire book volumes in focus (e.g. specifying page numbers), making the task more feasible for part-time students with limited time. These recommendations aim to improve the study guides for better student guidance.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Not applicable

2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Compliant

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

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

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI*

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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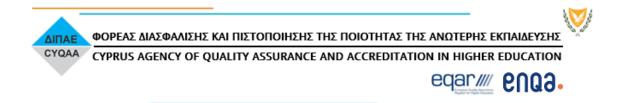
Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Teaching staff recruitment and development
After the conversation that the EEC had with the teaching staff, it is clear that all of them are qualified enough for their positions. The teaching staff status is appropriate to offer a quality programme of teaching Greek as a second/foreign language.

At UNIC, an adequate number of staff members in the relevant subdisciplines have permanent positions with an appropriate range in rank, in the following fields: phonetics, phonology, syntax, bilingualism/multilingualism, heritage languages, ICT in language teaching, literature. At the University of Patras, an adequate number of Early Career researchers (adjunct Faculty) and one tenured member of staff contribute to the course in the fields of lexicology, morphology, syntax, second/foreign language learning and ICT in language teaching.

The overall research activities of the academic personnel involved in the programme are satisfactory.
Several national and international projects and publications show that staff members at UNIC and the University of Patras are involved in research and innovation and during the visit, innovative teaching

methods were mentioned with the use of ICT. Research publications on the link between education and research are related to the courses they teach.

All teaching staff is committed to a) presenting and disseminating their research findings at international conferences, b) publishing their work in peer reviewed journals and c) getting engaged in research-funded projects. Their studies and publications are related to the programme's courses, as the research interests of the faculty are in the context of the thematic modules taught in the programme. The teaching staff publications are within the discipline as the research interests and expertise of the faculty are linked to the courses in the proposed program and in the provision of updated and new knowledge to the students.

The number of teaching staff seems to be sufficient for the proposed joint programme. They engage in the development of the proposed program adding more value to it. In addition, at the beginning of each semester, the plan is to submit/ re-submit the course materials before they are made available on-line.

Based on the information from the teaching staff and the feedback from the graduates of the previous programme, innovation and development of students' multiple competencies are encouraged and this is very important in a fast-changing world where especially technology is a rapidly evolving element.

Based on the lesson observation we had the opportunity to check the online teaching platform (Moodle), the overall material and the teaching path that can in principle influence student satisfaction and general education experience to an adequate degree. It is also clear that the teaching staff is encouraged to dedicate the same time and effort to the online teaching process as they would have done for the conventional teaching.
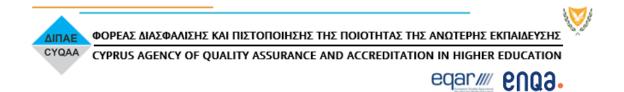
Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- Dedicated faculty members with strong research output, teaching experience and professional qualifications
- Many collaborations on European and International basis
- Staff with expertise and publications in using technology in language teaching
- Staff with degrees from universities across the world.

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

- It is not clear how members of staff in UNIC and Patras will be supported in their teaching skills development as some of them are in early stages of their teaching career.
- It is important that guest lectures with special expertise or/and experience are invited to contribute to the diversity of the course materials.

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

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

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

> **Sub-areas**
> **4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria**
> **4.2 Student progression**
> **4.3 Student recognition**
> **4.4 Student certification**

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

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

4.2 Student progression

Standards

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

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*

- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
    - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
    - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*
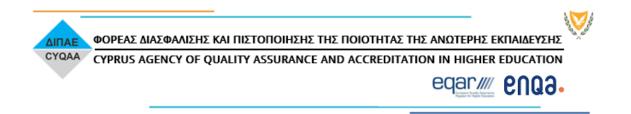
Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Pre-defined regulations regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification are in place. They are in line with the University internal regulations and with European and international practices. The recognition of prior learning is carried out in accordance with the existing legal regulations.

The program admits students in the Fall and Spring semesters and admission requirements for the study programme are appropriate (but see infra "recommendations"). All applicants should have a BA in Philology or Education subjects from Cypriot, Greek or foreign universities. Teaching experience will be taken into account, but is not a requirement for admission, and candidates from other disciplines may be considered if they have previous experience in teaching Greek as a second language.

To ensure the smooth progression of students, each student has an Academic Advisor who, together with the Head of Department and the Programme Coordinator assist students in academic matters.

The students the EEC interviewed, who were graduates of the previous programme, evaluated the activity of teaching staff very positively. However, statistical information on the results of the anonymous student satisfaction surveys from the previous programme has not been presented to the EEC.

The degree awarded is a Master of Arts in Teaching Greek to Speakers of Other Languages (1,5 years/90 ECTs). Upon completion, students receive a certificate stating their final grade. According to the information provided during the interviews, the certificate will also include a Diploma Supplement in Greek and in English.

The DL's Moodle platform provides a wide range of learning analytics tools designed to monitor student progression and performance. These tools use log data from students showing, among other information, limited participation or incomplete activities. However, it remains unclear how instructors systematically use this data, in accordance with established procedures, to support students. Moreover, the specific learning benefits of these tools, such as improved performance and reduced dropout rates, were not demonstrated during the meetings.

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

- The virtual classroom used (moodle platform) provides a clear and effective environment for monitoring student progress and the tasks and activities they must carry out. Likewise, the various forms of assessment provided seem to ensure appropriate monitoring of students in the future as well.
- The teaching staff is very aware of the students' needs and care about personalized monitoring of their progress.
- High level of graduate student satisfaction with the activity of the teaching staff.
- According to the statement of those responsible for the DL Unit, a personalized follow-up is carried out for those students who are less active, to detect and solve possible problems and avoid drop-outs. The opportunity for partt-time study is also available.

- A strength was noted around the general low drop-out rate for DL programmes (2.5-5%). According to the interviews held during the site visit with teaching staff and graduates, students' circumstances are taken into account to facilitate progress within the study programme. Students receive technical and teaching support to provide work-life balance.

- Students will receive a certificate signed by both universities.

- The EEC acknowledges the DL unit's innovative efforts to remain at the forefront by adopting advanced learning analytics mechanisms, especially those leveraging AI and Machine Learning, to monitor and predict student performance and dropout rates. This allows UNIC to proactively undertake corrective actions.

- Student feedback will be actively sought on an ongoing basis throughout the course delivery and at the end of the course. Student feedback will be taken seriously and acted upon promptly, leading to specific measures of continuous quality improvement by the Universities.

Finally, the Universities recognize the significant impact of generative AI, such as ChatGPT, on academic practices and are actively formulating strategies to address concerns related to academic integrity. In particular, UNIC emphasizes the responsible and ethical use of AI tools, guided by a comprehensive "Policy

for the Use of AI Tools" to enhance teaching, learning and operational efficiency. This policy, applicable to the entire university community, aligns with the Senate's resolution for the use of AI tools.
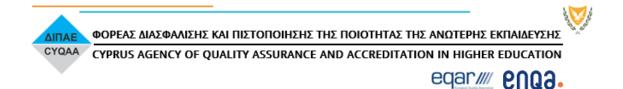
Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- If the aim of the programme is to attract also international students and students from foreign universities, not just from Cyprus and Greece, the level of knowledge of the Greek language should be included in the admission criteria.
- In addition, according to the admission criteria, candidates from other disciplines (outside the field of philology and education) may be accepted in the programme if they have previous experience in teaching Greek. It should perhaps be clarified how and according to which criteria this previous experience will be recognized.
- It would be advisable, going forward, for information on student admission, progression, recognition and certification to be included in the Study Guide. In addition, it would be useful for the requirements and guidelines for part-time study to be added to the Study Guide.
- A data collection system in relation to student success, dropout rates, employability and career paths of future graduates should be in place.

Although the joint programme is new, the EEC noted that the clarity on how student feedback is effectively utilized for specific measures of continuous quality improvement by the Universities remains unclear, as information on quality standards and indicators from the current programme was not provided.

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

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

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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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

Sub-areas

    5.1 Teaching and Learning resources
    5.2 Physical resources
    5.3 Human support resources
    5.4 Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

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

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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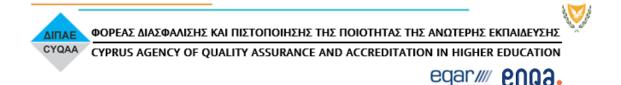
available to them.

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

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

5.4 Student support

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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> - *How is student mobility being supported?*

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

The UNIC's DL unit offers pedagogical support for creating and evaluating online courses, ensuring adherence to international standards for study materials, interactive activities, and assessments. The focus is on study material requirements, interactive activities, and teaching innovation, including a variety of multimodal learning resources (e-books, interactive videos, etc.), beneficial for DL. The EEC recognizes the unit's efforts to improve the online teaching and learning experience.

The proposed joint programme's courses include a Study Guide, a weekly outline of module content, including summary, purpose, expected outcomes, keywords, relevant bibliography, activities and assignments. However, the EEC points out that some required readings are entire book volumes and the EEC suggests there is room for improvement in this regard.

The DL unit (ePSU) is tasked with providing pedagogical support to faculty members in designing, creating, implementing and evaluating online courses, ensuring compliance with international standards. A comprehensive Faculty Handbook offers clear, detailed guidelines for course development and delivery.

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

The DL unit's comprehensive handbook, underpinned by the universities' procedures and policies, provides guidelines for developing and delivering DL courses. This structured approach along with dedicated resources and services for improving DL, is highly commended. The EEC views it as crucial support for ensuring teaching quality and offering a foundation for faculty members to enhance their DL expertise. The handbook serves as a crucial resource for ensuring quality and consistency across all DL programs. The library representatives at the meeting were helpful in presenting the online resources made available and updated regularly.

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

Based on the study guide samples, the EEC recommends that the Institution could offer more detailed guidance for online students (all students in the proposed joint programme), including a detailed learning and assessment methodology. Moreover, the EEC recommends providing clear indications of the relevant parts of the entire book volumes in focus (e.g. specifying page numbers), making the task more feasible for part-time students with limited time. These recommendations aim to improve the study guides for better student guidance.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Not applicable
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

6. Eligibility *(ALL ESG)*

Sub-areas

    6.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement
    6.2 The joint programme
    6.3 Added value of the joint programme

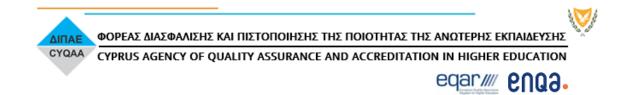**6.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement**

Standards

- *The joint programme is offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems.*
- *The terms and conditions of the joint programme are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:*
  - *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
  - *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, including funding, sharing of costs and income, resources for mobility of staff and students*
  - *Admission and selection procedures for students*
  - *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
  - *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*
  - *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*

6.2 The joint programme

Standards

- *The partner universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes.*
- *The joint programme is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design,*

delivery and further development of the programme.

- *Aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated, including a joint syllabus, language policy, as well as an account of the intended added value of the programme.*
- *Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.*
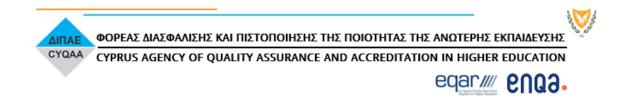
6.3 Added value of the joint programme

Standards

The joint programme leads to the following added values:

- *Increases internationalisation at the institutions.*
- *Stimulates multinational collaboration on teaching at a high level and makes cooperation binding.*
- *Increases transparency between educational systems.*
- *Develops study and research alternatives in accordance with emerging needs.*
- *Improves educational and research collaboration.*
- *Offers students an expanded and innovative arena for learning.*
- *Increases highly educated candidates' employability and motivation for mobility in a global labour market.*
- *Increases European and non-European students' interest in the educational programme.*
- *Increases competence at partner institutions through cooperation and implementation of a best practice system.*
- *Increases the institution's ability to change in step with emerging needs.*
- *Contributes to tearing down cultural barriers, both personal and institutional.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Does the joint study programme conform to the requirements of a study programme offered at the specific level?*
- *Is there a system that assures the quality of joint provision and guarantees that the aims of the programme are met?*
- *Do the mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the joint study programme take into consideration the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)? Are they adopted by all the universities involved?*
- *Is the division of responsibilities in ensuring quality clearly defined among the partner universities?*
- *Is relevant information about the programme, e.g. admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures, well documented and published by taking into account the specific needs of students?*
- *What is the added value of the programme of study?*
- *Is there a sustainable funding strategy among the partner universities? Explain.*

Findings

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

In developing the joint e-learning programme between the two universities, it was noted that UNIC has assumed a leading role in the DL perspective of the collaboration. This is based on UNIC's more mature infrastructure and broader array of resources dedicated to DL compared to the University of Patras. The EEC views this approach as beneficial, optimizing DL resource utilization while avoiding potential administrative and technical challenges that could arise from students accessing resources across two different systems. However, the specific terms of the cooperation agreement between the two universities were not presented during the meetings. The EEC was only presented with an old (2016) MoU between the two Universities. It is therefore not completely clear what the actual collaboration in this joint programme and the benefits for each university are.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.
- The EEC acknowledges that the joint programme leads to an added value for the two Universities.
- It increases internationalisation of both institutions and stimulates strong synergies between them
- It develops highly educated candidates' employability and motivation for mobility in a global labour market.
- It Improves educational and research collaboration.

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

- The committee was not provided with the details of the collaboration agreement between UNIC and the University of Patras regarding the co-development of course content and the distribution of labour regarding content management and the financial organization and implications for each institution.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
6.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	Partially compliant
6.2	The joint programme	Partially compliant
6.3	Added value of the joint programme	Compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

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

Overall, the proposed joint programme is well thought through and developed. The program is supported by qualified and motivated teaching staff from both institutions, knowledgeable and efficient administrative staff, and an appropriate level of library, IT, financial and human resources. The nature of the programme is compatible with Distance Learning infrastructure and delivery. The DL unit at UNIC has long-term expertise in delivering such programmes and the added value of this particular programme is in its joint nature between UNIC and the University of Patras. In addition, the overall student support from both academic and administrative staff seems to be appropriate. The applied nature of the joint programme enhances the employability of future graduates in the area of primary and secondary education.
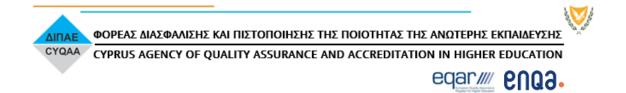
The EEC hopes that the recommendations offered in the Sections above will be carefully by the partner institutions to ensure the best possible delivery of the programme:

Theory and practice could achieve even better balance, including:
- a stronger component on Greek language assessment
- a clearly defined component in each of the theory modules relating theory and practice of TGSOL
- a focus on skill development in TGSOL, namely Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing
- An obligatory research thesis or dissertation seems to be the norm in many other European institutions, even if it is not an absolute requirement; this may be especially important for students wishing to pursue further studies at the PhD level. As the programme stands, it is not clear how the workload for a thesis could be replaced by the workload two elective modules.
- Coherence between modules could be improved: the content of theory modules could include a component clearly outlined in the week-by-week description of the topics covered, which would establish the link between the content of the module and the applied linguistic/teaching methodology aspect of the course.
- As it is a Joint Master's Programme, it is essential that there is close cooperation between the two partner Universities in the development, evaluation and improvement of the modules offered. We also recommend that extensive performance evaluation is in place that provides information on the quality of the programme.
- Relations with alumni can be more streamlined and a track record of future steps of graduates can be established.
- Documentation and meeting information did not clarify the use of gamification strategies to enhance student motivation and engagement in the e-assessment process. The EEC also suggests adopting advanced feedback forms, such as intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents, for immediate and automatic feedback, facilitating student progress and self-evaluation.
- The EEC points out potential issues with online synchronous teleconferences and teamworks if the programme expands internationally, given the challenges of coordinating across diverse time zones. The universities' support for this collaboration type and the recommendation for adapting the DL model to increase asynchronous online interaction and collaboration were unclear.

- Based on the study guide samples, the EEC recommends that the Institution could offer more detailed guidance for online students (all students in the proposed joint programme), including a detailed learning and assessment methodology.
- It is not clear how members of staff in UNIC and Patras will be supported in their teaching skills development as some of them are in early stages of their teaching career.
- If the aim of the programme is to attract also international students and students from foreign universities, not just from Cyprus and Greece, the level of knowledge of the Greek language should be included in the admission criteria.
- In addition, according to the admission criteria, candidates from other disciplines (outside the field of philology and education) may be accepted in the programme if they have previous experience in teaching Greek. It should perhaps be clarified how and according to which criteria this previous experience will be recognized.
- Although the joint programme is new, the EEC noted that the clarity on how student feedback is effectively utilized for specific measures of continuous quality improvement by the Universities remains unclear, as information on quality standards and indicators from the current programme was not provided.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Eleni Griva	
Ianthi Maria Tsimpli	
Alicia Morale Ortiz	
Santi Caballe	
Michalis Stylianos Stavrou	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 28/3/2024