

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 15.10.2024

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

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

In Greek:

Βιολογικές Επιστήμες (3 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 180 ECTS,
Διδακτορικό)

In English:

Biological Sciences (3 academic years, 180 ECTS,
Doctor of Philosophy)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):**



In Greek: Concentrations
In English: Concentrations

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

Introduction

Site Visit Report – University of Nicosia, 14th October 2024

On the occasion of our full-day site visit to the University of Nicosia, we were highly impressed by the overall quality of both the scientific and administrative staff. The university's strong connection and collaboration with industry stand out as a key strength, offering a unique competitive edge.

The biology program at the University of Nicosia is particularly noteworthy for its integration of nursing, nutrition, and sports sciences, distinguishing it from more traditional programs. This interdisciplinary approach creates a valuable niche that sets the program apart, offering a holistic view of health sciences.

Feedback from all stakeholders—including students, staff, administrators, and industry partners—was overwhelmingly positive, underscoring the program's impact and relevance.

Recommendations:

1. Initial Funding for Student Cohorts:

To ensure a strong start, we recommend the university provide internal funding for the first one or two cohorts of students. This will help establish a solid track record of success, which in turn can attract external funding in the future.

2. Flexibility in Admissions and Administration:

We suggest introducing greater flexibility in the program's admissions process and administrative procedures, particularly in relation to earning ECTS credits. Incorporating online elements could further enhance the program's appeal and accessibility (particularly for the initial introductory phase).

3. Reinvestment of Tuition Fees:

A portion of the tuition fees should be reinvested in the program, with a focus on supporting PhD research through funding consumables, infrastructure development, or training programs. This reinvestment will further strengthen the program's resources and opportunities.

4. Develop a Unique Program Focus:

To enhance its distinctiveness, the program should focus on its integration of nutrition science, nursing, and sports science, further solidifying its position as a leader in interdisciplinary health education.

5. Strengthening the Role of the PhD Committee:

Finally, we recommend strengthening the role of the PhD committee, particularly in matters of conflict resolution, to ensure smooth operation and support for doctoral students.

A. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Georgia Hadjiandoni	Member (Student)	Open University of Cyprus
Raphael Sandaltzopoulos	Member	Democritus University of Tharce
Gerhard Braus	Member	University of Göttingen
Jens C. Schwamborn	Chair	University of Luxembourg
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

B. 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:*
 - *is a part of the strategic management of the program.*
 - *focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study program.*
 - *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*
 - *is developed with input from industry leaders and other stakeholders (i.e. industry leaders, professional bodies/associations, social partners, NGO's, governmental agencies) to align with professional standards.*
 - *integrates employer surveys to adapt to evolving workplace demands.*
 - *regularly utilizes alumni feedback for long-term effectiveness assessment.*
 - *is published and implemented by all 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*
 - *Aligns course learning outcomes with student assessments using rubrics to ensure objectives are met.*
 - *Connects each course's aims and objectives with the programme's overall aims and objectives through mapping, aligning with the institutional strategy.*
 - *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*
 - *collaborates with industry experts for curriculum development.*
 - *conducts joint reviews with external academic specialists to maintain academic rigor.*
 - *performs periodic assessments with external stakeholders to ensure continuous alignment with market needs.*
 - *establishes collaboration with international educational institutions or/& other relevant international bodies for a global perspective.*
 - *conducts regular feedback sessions with local community leaders for societal relevance.*

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*
- *In addition, the program has established mechanisms of transparency & communication to ensure that*
 - Professional bodies validate program descriptions and outcomes.
 - Community leaders actively participate in ensuring that the program's public information is relevant and resonates with the local and societal context.
 - External auditors review public information for accuracy & consistency vis-à-vis the actual implementation of the program.
 - Industry-specific & societal information is regularly updated with expert inputs.
 - Alumni testimonials are included for a realistic portrayal of program outcomes.

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed using specific indicators and data i.e.:*
 - *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*
 - *industry trend analysis.*
 - *feedback mechanisms from external partners/stakeholders*
 - *data exchanges with professional networks*
 - *employer insights concerning career readiness*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*



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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



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Findings

- **Procedure for Quality Assurance:** The quality assurance process involves multiple stakeholders, including an internal quality committee, external reviewers, and students. The review is continuous and structured, involving periodic evaluations aligned with European Qualifications Framework and Bologna Process standards. The procedure includes both internal and external feedback loops.
- **Involvement in Programme Design and Development:** The program design includes input from faculty members, external academic experts, and industry stakeholders. The programme is regularly updated based on the labor market needs, societal changes, and academic research. However, the involvement of students in the design and content review is limited, mostly appearing at later stages of feedback collection.
- **Student Involvement:** Student participation in program development is primarily through feedback mechanisms after course delivery. There are opportunities for improvement in more structured, ongoing student involvement in curriculum development.
- **Alignment with Societal Needs and Labour Market:** The program stays up-to-date with the latest trends in the labor market, especially in fields related to digital technologies and global challenges. Courses are periodically revised to maintain alignment with societal and industry needs.
- **Consistency with European Qualifications Framework (EQF):** The program's content and learning outcomes are consistent with EQF guidelines. The institution adheres to both national and international standards, ensuring that graduates have qualifications recognized across Europe.
- **Programme Coherence:** Course mapping ensures coherence across the program, with clear progressions and minimal overlap between courses. Regular internal reviews ensure that teaching staff are aware of the overall programme's structure and objectives.
- **Competencies Development:** The programme supports general competencies such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and communication skills through specific courses and co-curricular activities. There is an emphasis on research skills and critical thinking.
- **Graduation Rates and Pass Rates:** Data on graduation and pass rates is not applicable at this stage, since the programme has not started. The overall structure ensures timely graduation, although detailed statistics and benchmarking against European programs are not prominently shared.
- **Student Workload and ECTS:** The program workload is well-aligned with the ECTS credits, and mechanisms are in place to ensure that students' actual workload reflects the program design.
- **International Opportunities:** International students have opportunities to participate through partnerships with foreign institutions, though the number of modules offered in foreign languages appears limited. PhD students in the program have the opportunity to go to foreign institutions. However, currently

this depends on mentor collaborations, it would be beneficial to establish interactions with international institutes as part of the program. Potential some of the tuition fee income could be used to establish this.

- **Transparency and Public Availability:** Information related to the program of study, including entry requirements and learning outcomes, is publicly available. However, more transparency on graduate employment outcomes and career paths could be beneficial.
- **Graduates' Success in the Labour Market:** Previous graduates in other PhD programmes of the school appear to have successful employment outcomes, especially in research and specialized sectors, but more robust data collection mechanisms (e.g., alumni surveys) would provide clearer insights.

Strengths

- **Comprehensive External and Internal Review System:** The involvement of external reviewers and adherence to national and international standards (e.g., EQF) ensures the programme's high academic quality.
- **Adaptation to Market Needs:** The program is regularly updated based on market trends and employer feedback, maintaining relevance to both students and employers.
- **Emphasis on Research and Global Collaboration:** Strong emphasis on research and collaborations with international institutions enhances the academic environment and provides global exposure to students.
- **Programme Coherence:** Clear mapping of course objectives to the overall program goals ensures smooth student progression and avoids overlap.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- **Number of students:** The programme shall only start if a minimum number of students (e.g. 3 per year) is reached. Starting with less students will make the development of a coherent programme difficult.
- **Formalize Student Involvement:** While students are involved in feedback, their input in the actual development and revision process should be more formalized. Creating student committees or councils to give continuous feedback would make their input more impactful. Regular formal meetings should be scheduled to give continuous feedback.
- **Greater Transparency in Employment Outcomes:** There is room to improve the transparency of graduate career paths. Regular surveys of alumni and data collection on job placement should be made publicly available to provide insights into program success. This is becoming more relevant once the programme is running for a couple of years.
- **Strengthen Feedback Mechanisms for Stakeholders:** Though industry feedback is utilized, there is a need for a more structured system to ensure that external stakeholders (employers, alumni) contribute consistently and effectively to the program's development.

- **Enhanced Data on Graduation and Pass Rates:** Publicly available, detailed data on graduation rates and comparisons with other European programs could better showcase the program's success.

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	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

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

2.2 Practical training

2.3 Student assessment

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

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*
- *Detailed schedules in course materials are included, explicitly stating the expected hours for lectures, self-study, and group projects, ensuring transparency in time allocation.*
- *A system is integrated where each learning activity is assigned a weight proportional to its importance and time requirement, aiding in balanced curriculum design.*

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.*

- *The expected hours for different components of practical training, such as lab work, fieldwork, and internships are clearly documented in the training manuals*
- *A weighting system is applied to various practical training elements, reflecting their significance in the overall learning outcomes and student workload.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*
 - *The time allocation for each assessment task is explicitly stated in course outlines, ensuring students are aware of the expected workload.*
 - *A balanced assessment weighting strategy is implemented, considering the complexity and learning objectives of each task, to ensure fair evaluation of student performance.*
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Findings

- **Teaching Based on Learning Outcomes:** The teaching staff bases their teaching and assessment methods on clearly stated course objectives and learning outcomes. Course outlines are mandatory for all courses, which explicitly detail learning outcomes, teaching methodologies, and assessment criteria.
- **Consideration of Students' Abilities and Needs:** The program emphasizes flexibility in teaching methods to cater to diverse student needs. Faculty members are encouraged to use adaptive methods to accommodate students' varying learning preferences and abilities. This includes multiple assessment formats and accessible learning materials, available through Moodle.
- **Development of General Competencies:** Educational activities foster the development of general competencies such as digital literacy, communication skills, and critical thinking. Tools like Moodle and SPSS are used extensively to build students' digital and research competencies.

- **Use of Modern Educational Technologies:** Modern technology is integrated into teaching to enhance learning efficiency. Tools such as Cisco WebEx and Planet E-Stream are used for virtual classes and lecture capture, ensuring flexible and effective learning environments.
- **Theory and Practice Interconnection:** Courses are designed to interconnect theory with practical applications. This is evident in the structured use of practical examples, simulations, and case studies during lectures. Practical training is included in certain programs, but detailed guidelines for internships or hands-on training were not fully elaborated.
- **Student Involvement in Research:** Students are actively involved in research, particularly in postgraduate programs. Research seminars, workshops, and assignments help students develop essential research skills. The supervision of research papers is well-structured, with faculty providing personalized guidance.
- **Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms:** Assessment criteria are clear and transparent. Regular feedback is provided to students, ensuring that they can gauge their progress effectively. The program has also established a formal appeal procedure for assessments.

Strengths

- **Comprehensive Use of Educational Technologies:** The integration of platforms like Moodle, Cisco WebEx, and Planet E-Stream enhances learning flexibility and supports diverse pedagogical approaches.
- **Focus on General Competencies:** The program is well-structured to develop general competencies, such as digital literacy and teamwork, through its use of modern technologies and interactive learning environments.
- **Well-Structured Assessment Processes:** The institution's clear and consistent assessment processes, including the possibility of appealing grades and receiving feedback, contribute to a fair learning environment.
- **Student Involvement in Research:** Active engagement in research projects helps students develop critical skills in scientific inquiry and academic writing, ensuring that learning outcomes align with real-world applications.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- **Further Integration of Practical Training:** While theory and practice are interconnected, the practical training component could benefit from more structured guidelines and stronger feedback mechanisms from students and stakeholders regarding internships and real-world applications.

- **Broader Range of Assessment Methods:** Although assessments are clear, incorporating a wider range of assessment formats, such as peer reviews or collaborative projects, could better address different learning styles and foster deeper engagement.
- **Enhanced Monitoring of Student Workload:** More consistent feedback mechanisms could be implemented to ensure that the student workload remains aligned with ECTS credit allocations. This would help identify any imbalance in actual student effort and the intended workload.
- **Expand Faculty Training in New Technologies:** While educational technologies are used effectively, continuous faculty training in new and innovative digital tools would ensure that teaching remains cutting-edge and aligned with the evolving digital landscape.

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

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

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

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

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

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

Findings

- **Qualifications and Competence:** The teaching staff possesses qualifications aligned with the program's objectives. All members hold doctoral degrees in relevant fields, and they have extensive experience in academia and industry. Their scholarly activities are closely connected to the courses they teach, ensuring that both education and research inform each other.
- **Support and Development of Teaching Skills:** The institution provides opportunities for faculty development, including seminars and workshops aimed at enhancing teaching skills. Additionally, there is a

formal peer and student evaluation system in place to assess teaching performance, which informs professional development efforts.

- **Promotion and Evaluation:** The promotion of teaching staff is based on a balanced assessment of their teaching, research output, and service to the academic community. The Excellence in Teaching Award is an example of recognition for high-quality teaching.
- **Visiting and Adjunct Staff:** Visiting staff from other institutions contribute to the program, although their number does not exceed the permanent teaching staff. This allows the program to maintain consistency and benefit from external expertise while ensuring stability.
- **Use of Technology in Teaching:** The teaching staff uses a variety of technological tools, including learning management systems like Moodle, and digital resources to enhance the learning experience. These technologies support interactive learning and allow students to engage more deeply with course content.
- **Student Feedback on Teaching:** Student evaluations are conducted regularly, and their results are used to improve teaching methods and materials. There is evidence that the institution values student feedback and adjusts its teaching approaches accordingly.

Strengths

- **Highly Qualified Staff:** The majority of the teaching staff hold doctoral degrees, with extensive expertise in their respective fields. Their publications and research activities are closely tied to the subjects they teach.
- **Faculty Development and Recognition:** Continuous faculty development is encouraged, with opportunities for skill enhancement. The institution's formal recognition mechanisms, such as the Excellence in Teaching Award, promote a culture of high-quality teaching.
- **Integration of Research and Teaching:** There is a strong connection between research and teaching. Faculty members are involved in ongoing research projects, and students are often encouraged to participate in research activities. This ensures that courses are informed by the latest academic developments.
- **Effective Use of Technology:** The teaching staff's effective use of modern teaching tools, such as Moodle, WebEx, and data analysis software, enhances the learning environment and ensures that students acquire digital literacy alongside traditional subject matter knowledge.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- **More Structured Feedback for Faculty:** While peer and student evaluations are conducted, providing more structured and frequent feedback loops, particularly for new staff, could further enhance teaching quality. This can be



ties to ongoing professional development programs.

- **Balancing Teaching and Research Time:** The balance between teaching duties and research activities should be continually reviewed to ensure that faculty have sufficient time for both. Ensuring that research time release is fairly allocated, based on research output, will maintain high standards in both areas.
- **Broader Faculty Engagement with External Institutions:** Expanding opportunities for more collaborative teaching arrangements with international institutions would enhance the global outlook of the program and provide students with a more diverse academic experience.
- **Strengthening Student-Staff Interaction:** While student feedback mechanisms exist, more active and regular forums for students to engage with staff outside of formal evaluations (e.g., town hall meetings or focus groups) would improve communication and help tailor the learning environment to evolving student needs.



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	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

- **Pre-Defined Admission Requirements:** Admission regulations for the study program are clearly defined and published. Applicants are required to hold a recognized Bachelor's and Master's degree in a related field, along with submission of other documents such as transcripts, letters of recommendation, and a research proposal.
- **Admission of International Students:** Admission for international students follows the same process as local students, with the added requirement of language proficiency (TOEFL, IELTS, or equivalent). The level of international students' prior preparation is assessed through their academic performance and submission of standardized test scores.
- **Student Progression Monitoring:** The program has established mechanisms to monitor student progression. The Department Postgraduate Programmes Committee (DPPC) plays a significant role in tracking students' academic performance and progression, ensuring regular evaluations of academic milestones.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning:** There are clearly defined processes in place for the recognition of prior learning and work experience, which are assessed in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The institution cooperates with other higher education institutions and national ENIC/NARIC centers for recognition of foreign qualifications.
- **Certification and Diploma Supplement:** The institution provides students with a diploma supplement that adheres to European and international standards, detailing the qualification obtained, learning outcomes, and the context of the studies pursued.

Strengths

- **Transparent Admission Process:** The admission criteria are clearly published and consistently implemented, ensuring transparency for both local and international students. The inclusion of multiple layers of evaluation (academic records, personal interviews, and research proposals) ensures that applicants are thoroughly assessed.

- **Effective Monitoring of Student Progress:** The program has an organized system for tracking student progression, with clear responsibilities allocated to the DPPC and other academic bodies. This ensures students are provided with timely feedback and support throughout their studies.
- **International Recognition and Mobility:** The institution's adherence to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its cooperation with ENIC/NARIC centers ensure that student mobility is supported, and qualifications are recognized internationally.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- **Enhance Support for International Students:** While international students follow the same admission process as local students, additional preparatory programs or bridging courses could be offered to ensure they meet the required academic standards before admission.
- **Broader Use of Recognition Procedures for Informal Learning:** While the program recognizes formal qualifications and work experience, expanding recognition procedures to include non-formal and informal learning (e.g., MOOCs or professional training) could provide more flexibility and enhance access to the program.
- **Increase Awareness of Diploma Supplement:** Although the diploma supplement is provided, more emphasis on informing students about its importance for international recognition and mobility could be beneficial, particularly for students intending to continue their studies or work abroad.

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	Partially compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

5.2 Physical resources

5.3 Human support resources

5.4 Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

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

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

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

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

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*
- *Students receive support in research-led teaching through engagement in research projects, mentorship from research-active faculty, and access to resources that enhance their research skills and critical engagement with current studies.*

Findings

- **Teaching and Learning Resources:** The university provides adequate and readily accessible resources to support teaching and learning. Facilities such as libraries, IT infrastructure, and access to digital materials are available to all students. The learning management system (Moodle) and tools like Cisco WebEx and Planet E-Stream facilitate both in-person and distance learning.
- **Adaptability to Changing Student Needs:** The institution's infrastructure, including IT and classroom resources, is designed to be scalable and flexible to accommodate varying student numbers. The use of cloud-based solutions such as Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services ensures that the university can adjust to changes in student demand.
- **Human Support Resources:** The Centre for Research and Counselling Services (KESY) provides individualized psychological and academic support. Additionally, students benefit from career counselling services, academic advising, and mentoring.
- **Support for Diverse Student Populations:** The program is attentive to the needs of diverse student groups, including international, part-time, employed, and students with disabilities. Special services like accessible learning materials, student counselling, and mentorship programs are available to ensure inclusivity.

Strengths

- **High-Quality IT Infrastructure:** The university's IT infrastructure is robust, with cloud services (Microsoft Azure, AWS) supporting flexible learning models and ensuring high availability for students. The use of platforms such as Moodle, Cisco WebEx, and Planet E-Stream offers modern, scalable learning environments.
- **Teaching assistant program:** Students have the opportunity to obtain a teaching assistant position. This provides them with some income and give them first experiences in teaching.
- **Comprehensive Student Support Services:** The university offers a range of support services, including KESY for psychological support, career counselling services, and academic advising. These services are well-organized and available to all students.
- **Physical and Digital Resources:** Students have access to a well-equipped library, both on-campus and digitally, with access to thousands of e-books, journals, and databases. Partnerships with other libraries also provide students with additional resources.
- **Attention to Special Needs:** The program caters to students with diverse abilities by providing accessible IT resources, specialized counselling, and flexible learning pathways.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- **Enhance Resource Monitoring for Evolving Needs:** The institution's infrastructure is flexible, but there should be a continuous evaluation process to track the changing needs of students, especially in terms of physical facilities like labs and study spaces. More detailed feedback from both students and staff could help fine-tune resource allocation. Students shall have the possibility to acquire additional skills based on their specific needs, either internally or via secondments.
- **Expand Practical Training Resources:** While the current facilities support theoretical learning, an increase in hands-on training opportunities, especially in labs or fieldwork environments, would further align with the practical needs of the program. Feedback from both students and faculty could guide future resource investments.
- **Research laboratories:** Although some research laboratories (cell culture, molecular biology) are present they would benefit from some investment in infrastructure / equipment.
- **Improve Communication on Support Services:** While services such as counselling and career support are available, ensuring that all students are fully informed about the range of available services is crucial. Expanding orientation programs and making information more visible in digital platforms could help.

- **Strengthen Mobility Support:** The university encourages student mobility through partnerships with other institutions, but more could be done to streamline the process for international students. Providing more tailored support for students seeking to study abroad or participate in exchange programs would enhance global engagement.

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

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

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Sub-areas

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

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

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

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

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

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
 - *regular meetings*

- *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
- *support for writing research papers*
- *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

Findings

- **Admission Criteria:** Admission criteria for the doctoral programme are well-defined and published. Candidates must hold both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in a relevant field, with additional documentation such as an initial research proposal, letters of recommendation, and proof of English proficiency (TOEFL, IELTS, or equivalent). The admissions process includes interviews and an evaluation of academic performance and research potential.
- **PhD Programme Structure:** The stages of the PhD program are clearly outlined, including the formation of the doctoral program of study, the submission and defence of the research proposal, comprehensive exams (where applicable), the completion of research work, and the final PhD thesis defence. Students must also submit their thesis to the National Bioethical Committee when applicable.
- **Dissertation Guidelines:** There are explicit and detailed guidelines for dissertation writing, covering the format, structure (including chapters and bibliography), and submission process. The university also requires the use of Turnitin for plagiarism detection.
- **Supervision and Advisory Committees:** Each PhD student is assigned a three-member supervisory committee, chaired by a main supervisor who is a full-time faculty member. There are clear guidelines regarding the responsibilities of supervisors, including holding regular meetings and supporting students in publishing their work and participating in conferences.
- **Plagiarism and Ethics:** The institution takes academic misconduct seriously. The use of plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) is mandatory, and strict consequences are in place for plagiarism or academic fraud.

Strengths

- **Clear and Detailed Admission Process:** The detailed admissions process ensures that candidates are thoroughly vetted for their academic qualifications and research potential. The inclusion of interviews and research proposal evaluations ensures that only well-prepared candidates are admitted.
- **Comprehensive Supervision and Progress Monitoring:** Regular monitoring of student progress through formal meetings, advisory committees, and feedback mechanisms ensures that students stay on track in their

research journey. The clear duties of supervisors, including regular feedback and support in publishing, contribute to a strong mentoring environment.

- **Plagiarism Detection:** The mandatory use of Turnitin for plagiarism checks reflects the institution's commitment to maintaining academic integrity and the high standards expected from doctoral candidates.
- **Detailed Thesis Submission and Defence Process:** The PhD defence process is highly structured, ensuring transparency and fairness. The comprehensive guidelines for thesis writing and defence include precise formatting requirements and the steps leading up to the final viva examination.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- **Support for Doctoral Students' Transition to the Labour Market:** While the program provides strong academic training, further integration of industry-related skills or links with non-academic careers could enhance the value of the doctoral degree outside academia. Collaborations with industry stakeholders or offering more professional development workshops might better prepare students for diverse career paths. It is advised to include transferable skills courses and opportunities during the programme to further improve employability.
- **Increased Involvement in Interdisciplinary Research:** Encouraging more interdisciplinary collaborations and research projects could broaden the scope of doctoral research and provide students with wider perspectives. This could be achieved by promoting joint research initiatives across different departments or institutions.
- **More Robust Guidelines for Doctoral Student Workload:** While the supervisory structure is clear, more explicit guidelines on workload expectations (both in research and teaching assistantships) could help students manage their time more effectively. This could include setting clearer boundaries between research, teaching duties, and coursework.
- **Supervision conducted by PhD students:** It is recommended to give the PhD students the option to supervise BSc and MSc research projects. Results from these projects could become part of the final thesis of the PhD student.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Compliant
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant

6.3	Supervision and committees	Compliant
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C. Conclusions and final remarks

The programme of study under review demonstrates a well-structured foundation with clear alignment to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). It meets key quality standards in areas such as programme design, student-centred learning, teaching staff competence, student support, and doctoral education. However, there are areas for improvement that could significantly enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of the programme.

1) Alignment with EQF and Learning Outcomes

The programme successfully aligns with EQF standards by clearly defining learning outcomes, structuring qualifications, and mapping academic progress against recognized frameworks. Each course within the programme connects well with both institutional strategies and broader European frameworks. The use of ECTS ensures the programme's compliance with workload standards, while assessment methods are well-aligned with learning outcomes.

However, there is potential for improvement in the explicit monitoring of student workload to ensure that actual work corresponds to the allocated ECTS. Regular feedback from students on their workload compared to the planned hours would enhance this aspect. Further integration of interdisciplinary projects could also broaden the program's relevance, especially in today's interconnected fields of study.

2) Student-Centred Learning and Flexibility

The programme encourages student-centred learning, offering flexibility through various modes of delivery, including e-learning platforms such as Moodle and Cisco WebEx. The inclusion of both face-to-face and digital learning opportunities makes the programme adaptable and accessible. However, more structured mechanisms for involving students in the curriculum development process would further enhance this flexibility. Creating formal student advisory boards could provide ongoing input, making the learning experience more responsive to student needs.

Additionally, expanding the range of assessment methods to include more project-based or peer-assessed work would better reflect diverse learning preferences and further engage students in active learning.

3) Teaching Staff and Research Integration

The teaching staff is highly qualified, and there is a strong link between research and teaching, fostering a rich academic environment that supports critical thinking and innovation. Faculty members are active researchers, and students are encouraged to participate in research projects, particularly at the doctoral level. The professional development of teaching staff is well-structured, with opportunities for training and skill development.

To enhance staff performance further, there should be more frequent and structured feedback loops for faculty members, especially new staff. This would help maintain high teaching standards and foster continuous improvement in pedagogical practices. Moreover, the balance between teaching and research responsibilities should be carefully managed to ensure that staff can fully engage in both activities.

4) Student Admission, Progression, and Support

The programme has transparent and well-defined admission criteria, ensuring that students are adequately prepared for their studies. However, the support for international students and students with diverse backgrounds could be

strengthened. Introducing preparatory programs for international students and offering tailored support for diverse learners would ensure smoother transitions into the programme and improve retention.

The programme also benefits from comprehensive student support services, including academic counselling and psychological support. However, improving communication regarding these services would ensure that all students, particularly new and international ones, are fully aware of the support available to them. This would enhance their overall experience and academic success.

5) Doctoral Programmes

The doctoral programme is rigorous, with clear guidelines for admissions, thesis writing, and defence processes. Supervisory committees provide regular support and feedback, ensuring that doctoral candidates remain on track. The integration of plagiarism detection systems and the focus on research ethics strengthen the programme's academic integrity.

While the doctoral programme is academically strong, there is an opportunity to improve the transition of doctoral students to the labour market. Enhancing links between doctoral research and industry or non-academic career paths would broaden the appeal of the programme beyond academia. Offering career development workshops and establishing more partnerships with industry could help doctoral students prepare for diverse career opportunities.

6) Resource Allocation and Future-Proofing

The institution has invested in modern IT infrastructure and digital learning platforms, ensuring that students have access to high-quality learning environments. However, as student numbers fluctuate, there should be continuous monitoring of resource adequacy to ensure that facilities such as libraries, labs, and study spaces remain aligned with the changing needs of the programme. In particular, expanding practical training opportunities would further bridge the gap between theoretical learning and real-world applications.

7) Recommendations for Improvement

To elevate the programme further and ensure ongoing alignment with EQF standards, the following key areas should be addressed:

- It is advised to include transferable skills courses and opportunities to develop those.
- Increase student involvement in curriculum development through formalized feedback structures such as advisory boards.
- Diversify assessment methods to include more project-based, collaborative, and peer-assessed approaches, catering to diverse learning preferences.
- Strengthen support for international students, offering preparatory courses or language support to ensure readiness for the programme.
- Enhance practical training resources to give students more hands-on experience, particularly in labs and fieldwork.
- Formalize faculty feedback processes to provide structured, ongoing support for teaching staff development, especially for new hires.
- Expand the focus on non-academic career paths for doctoral students by integrating industry-relevant skills and establishing partnerships with industry stakeholders.



Final Remarks

Overall, the programme meets high academic standards and adheres well to the EQF, offering a solid educational foundation for students. By addressing the identified areas for improvement, the programme can enhance its responsiveness to student needs, increase its global competitiveness, and ensure continued academic excellence in both teaching and research. These adjustments will also ensure that the programme remains future-proof, adaptable to evolving educational and labour market demands.



D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Georgia Hadjiandoni	
Raphael Sandaltzopoulos	
Gerhard Braus	
Jens C. Schwamborn	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 15/10/2024