

Doc. 300.1.3

Date: June 8, 2021

# Feedback Report from EEC Experts

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Central Lancashire Cyprus
- **Town:** Larnaca
- **School/Faculty:** School of Sciences
- **Department:** Department/Sector
- **Programme of study under evaluation  
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

**In Greek:**

Πτυχίο Ψυχολογίας

**In English:**

BSc (Hons) Psychology

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

**In Greek:** N/A

**In English:** N/A



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 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

## A. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>Patricia BIJTTEBIER</b>	academic member + chair	KU Leuven
<b>Corine DE RUITER</b>	academic member	Maastricht University
<b>Oliver WILHELM</b>	academic member	Ulm University
<b>Myrto DEMETRIOU</b>	student representative	University of Cyprus
<b>Chloe YIANNAKOU CONSTANTINIDES</b>	psychologist	Council of Registration of Psychologists
<b>Name</b>	Position	University



## **B. Guidelines on content and structure of the report**

*The EEC based on the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) and the Higher Education Institution's response (Doc.300.1.2), must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*

## 1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

### *Areas of Improvement and Recommendations by the EEC:*

- a) In the internal procedures of quality control, it may be recommendable to include input from an international expert (e.g., inviting peers from established international universities to give input beyond the context of a formal EEC procedure).
- b) The programme is aligned with the UCLan UK BSc programme in Psychology, as is clear from the names of the course modules. However, the committee could not get a clear picture of the level and depth of statistical and methodological education in the current programme. In a similar vein, the committee is concerned about the foundational education in psychometrics and psychological assessment in the Cypriot program. These core aspects of psychology should be made explicit in the Bachelor program, as these courses are mandatory for graduates' eligibility to enter MSc programs in psychology in Continental Europe. If these contents are currently insufficiently integrated into the curriculum, the EEC recommends an adaptation of the modules in order to match the dosage of methodological and assessment-related education in continental B.Sc. programs. The lack of correspondence between the present degree and mainstream degrees across Europe might compromise student mobility at later stages of the academic career, as widely consensual learning objectives for B.Sc. degrees in psychology may not be achieved.
- c) The committee advises the programme staff to include discussion of the recent replication crisis in psychology, and ways of remediation, such as open science, preregistration, and open peer review. The prerequisites for discussing these issues – most importantly power and effect sizes, issues with Neyman-Pearson hypothesis testing, validity generalization including meta-analysis, and scientometric aspects - also need consideration in the courses.
- d) The committee fails to see the logical sequence and coherence of some parts of the programme. The first-year course Psychology of the Media seems highly specialized and needs to be placed later in the program, after students have gained some knowledge of the basics of developmental and social psychology. The large number of ECTS that is spent on optional English Language and Mathematics & Statistics in the first year creates the impression that this Psychology programme is trying to make up for deficiencies in students' prerequisite knowledge. The committee would like to suggest that these deficiencies are addressed in a preparatory program, preceding admission to Year 1. At present, the deficiencies are likely to impact the ability of students to effectively participate in the programme, particularly during the first year.
- e) The information management can be further improved by more in-depth analysis of the student population. The committee received quite global information, for instance, about the overall proportion of enrolled students from Cyprus, EU countries and Africa/Asia. The committee would like to have seen an overview of the number and origin of applicants for each academic year, the number of accepted applicants, the number of dropouts and the number of graduating students. The programme has a withdrawal rate of 10.57%. The committee would like to suggest in-depth study of reasons for withdrawal, so this can perhaps be avoided for future cohorts.

*HEI's response:* see Doc.300.1.2.



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

### *Areas of Improvement and Recommendations by the EEC:*

- a) The responsiveness of staff to students' needs should be balanced with a clear mission to increase students' personal growth in autonomy and self-efficacy. Higher Education Institutions need to prepare students for a competitive job market and a future professional life that will inevitably be filled with setbacks and disappointments. This aspect could receive more explicit attention in the program.
- b) The ECC had problems in getting a clear picture of the amount of practical training in the programme. The committee was left with the impression that major aspects of practical training, such as use of psychophysiological measures, interviewing methods, and assessment methods do not receive enough attention in the curriculum.

In many European institutions of higher education practical training begins with providing ample opportunity for skill development accompanying more technical classes. For instance, training in quantitative methods and statistics is usually arranged with associated practical classes in which increasingly complex data-analytic challenges are addressed. Similarly, learning success in psychological assessment-related classes is often stronger, if applied sections, exercises, and personal experiences are embedded into the instruction. Many European B.Sc. Psychology programs require students to deliver course credit during which students experience situations akin to what future participants, customers, and patients often experience. Students are also often asked to proctor tests, to score them, and to deliver feedback to participants, customers, or patients. Similarly, most programs include interview training. Hopefully, some of these examples are inspiring for the current program as well. Practical training obviously can also refer to opportunities for students to sit in or to try out laboratory-type activities. For instance, in many departments of psychology across Europe, the obligatory courses include lab sessions in which students learn essential practical aspects, neuro-anatomy, hormone analysis, recording an EEG, applying TMS, analysing (f)MRI data. Similarly, practical training often includes applied programming, for example for computer administrated experiments or surveys, for advanced data analysis. Obviously, some of this training might be situated within master degrees – but clearly many if not most competitive institutions chose to integrate a substantial practical training part into their B.Sc. degrees. The current program might consider doing so as well.

*HEI's response:* see Doc.300.1.2.

### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

#### *Areas of Improvement and Recommendations by the EEC:*

- a) There is limited staff exchange with UCLan-UK or other international universities; it would be good to actively invest in recruiting recognized visiting senior academic staff that can participate in teaching and setting up research labs.
- b) There is a low number of permanent staff members with most of them having a junior status. Also, the number of temporary and part-time teaching staff members is too high. To the EEC, this seems insufficient to guarantee the quality and innovativeness of the program.
- c) The teaching staff lacks diversity in different respects (academic background, expertise, country of origin, gender,...). The EEC encourages the program management to recruit a more diverse academic staff.
- d) The scientific productivity of the staff is limited (which may in part be due to difficult circumstances for research).

Staff publications are not always within the discipline of teaching.

In theory, procedures for the allocation of teaching hours are conceived as to safeguard time for research activity (e.g., decrease number of teaching hours for staff in administrative functions; allowing faculty with successful research bids to use research funds for buying out teaching time), but in practice research time seems insufficient to leave enough room for building a successful research career (as evidenced by the limited scientific productivity).

Ultimately the EEC adheres to the view that the unity of research and teaching is a key to sustainably successful departments. From this perspective, it seems recommendable that adjust courses to match their research expertise and accomplish alignment with mainstream continental programs of B.Sc. psychology. In the long run, these adjustments have the potential to foster incoming and outgoing student mobility, research affine students, and development of a recognizable research portfolio.

*HEI's response:* see Doc.300.1.2.

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

##### *Areas of Improvement and Recommendations by the EEC:*

- a) Admission criteria regarding English language proficiency are below current international standards, because most B.Sc. degree programmes require a IELTS score of 6.0 or higher, and not 5.0
- b) It is unclear how (and if at all) students are selected for the programme.  
UCLan university, as most private universities in Cyprus, reassure that students have to fulfil specific criteria in order to get admitted; such procedure takes place prior to enrolment. It is unclear to the ECC how many applications are received annually and how many of these applicants are actually admitted. Criteria should be clearly stated and strictly followed. Also it is unclear which is the maximum capacity given the presently available resources.
- c) In the case that students – in the course their B.Sci trajectory - wish to transfer from the UCLan program to a comparable program in a public university in Cyprus or another European university, they will probably not get admitted, given the UCLan curriculum and admission criteria. Students should be well-informed on their options and on these criteria in the case of deciding to transfer to a public or a continental European University.  
If the bachelor is accredited, then students may enter a Master Level degree but it is under doubt if students will be admitted to enter another University Master's degree program in another European country or the public University of Cyprus. Therefore, students should be informed for this possible future scenario before entering the program.
- d) Students should be informed prior to entering the program about the regulations of KYSATS (government degree evaluation department) and DIPAE concerning the alternatives the students will have in the process of their studies if any changes concerning their field of studies or the faculty occur.
- e) Employment opportunities and achievements should be clear and stated on behalf of the university (e.g., via statistics) before students' registration/acceptance.
- f) It should be taken under consideration the English/Greek Language selection of the program because if a student's Highschool degree was from a private English school, for example, then the students will have to attend and pass Greek language exams in order to enter the public sector in terms of employment in Cyprus.
- g) Although a double degree (with UCLan-UK) is awarded to the students, opportunities for actual collaboration with the UK program are insufficiently taken advantage of. Staff and student exchange are minimal.
- h) The fact that the UK left the European Union on December 31, 2020 may have adverse implications for future student and staff exchange. Alternative paths to incoming and outgoing student mobility should be developed.

*HEI's response:* see Doc.300.1.2.

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

### *Areas of Improvement and Recommendations by the EEC:*

- a) The EEC got the impression that recruitment of students for the program is stable at a low number. This poses a risk because it limits opportunities for growth, innovation and sustainability over the long run.
- b) The program would benefit from state-of-the science teaching in freely available software for data-analysis, such as R and JASP, instead of focusing only on IBM's SPSS. Such classes would most likely be supported by tutors.
- c) To further develop practical training in the program, the university would have to invest in lab equipment (e.g., psychophysiological lab). Perhaps collaboration with other universities in Cyprus would be a good option, to share limited resources.

*HEI's response:* see Doc.300.1.2.



**6. Additional for doctoral programmes**  
*(ALL ESG)*

N/A



## 7. Eligibility (Joint programmes) (ALL ESG)

N/A

## C. Conclusions and final remarks

*The EEC must provide final conclusions and remarks, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.*

### EEC's final conclusions and remarks

The EEC has carefully read the Higher Education Institution (HEI)'s Response to the EEC report on the BSc (Hons) in Psychology. Our EEC report provided a detailed assessment of different aspects of the program and the teaching and research context in which it currently operates, highlighting strengths as well as areas for improvement. Our report was the result of a careful and thorough study of all the materials provided beforehand and during the visit, as well as extensive Q&A sessions with staff members and students. It was phrased and delivered in such a way that the institution could and hopefully would use it as an opportunity to take or at least plan actions to improve the quality of the program in those assessment areas the EEC considered to be not (fully) compliant with the standards of the European Qualifications Framework. Overall, the EEC's main observation is that the HEI's Responses that – apart from some very minor amendments (e.g., revision of the English language course in the first year into English for Academic Purpose, addition of information on the replication crisis in psychology in a few courses) -, no substantive revisions or reorganizations of the curriculum are considered, let alone planned or implemented. The response document largely reiterates the documentation the EEC already had access to during the evaluation, on the basis of which the conclusions were drawn. For example, we realize that certain academic staff members do teach in their area of expertise (as is illustrated in the HEI's Response for Drs. Iordanou, Nikiforou, Psalta and Christodoulou) but this is not a complete list of staff members. As a consequence, and to our regret, the EEC cannot come to a different conclusion, nor make any new or additional suggestions, except the suggestion that it might be worthwhile that the HEI takes time to study the EEC report from a slightly different perspective. The EEC recommends to embrace the suggestions and recommendations and to capitalize on the opportunities the suggestions bring, for improvements in both the degree program itself and the context in which it is delivered by the highly committed staff. Our evaluation was performed merely three months ago; we expect that it will take considerable time to implement the suggestions made in the EEC report. At this moment, and given the HEI's Response to the report, we cannot draw a more favorable conclusion.



#### D. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Patricia BIJTTEBIER</b>	
<b>Corine DE RUITER</b>	
<b>Oliver WILHELM</b>	
<b>Myrto DEMETRIOU</b>	
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<a href="#">Click to enter Name</a>	

**Date:** June 8, 2021

