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Doc. 300.1.1

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report

(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**

  University of Limassol

- **Town: Limassol**

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

  - **Department/ Sector: Psychology**

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

  In Greek:

  Ψυχολογία (4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 180 ECTS,

  Διδακτορικό, PhD)

  In English:

   Psychology (4 academic years, 180 ECTS, Doctor of

- **Language(s) of instruction: English/Greek**

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].

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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

The external evaluation visit for the accreditation of the PhD Psychology at the University of Limassol took place on April 2nd, 2025. The visit was well organized by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) and followed a structured agenda that allowed for comprehensive engagement with all relevant stakeholders. The External Evaluation Committee (EEC), composed of international experts in the field of psychology, and educational quality assurance, started the day with a brief internal meeting and introduction. The panel was chaired by Professor Jan H. Kamphuis from the University of Amsterdam and included Professors Andrew J. Bremner, Victoria Helen Southgate, Dr. Andreas Paris (representing the Cyprus Psychologists Registration Council), and Ms. Andrea Constantinou (as the student representative).

The visit began with a meeting with the Rector of the University, Professor Theodore Panayotou, and the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, Professor Vasilis Polimenis, alongside members of the Internal Evaluation Committee. This was followed by a detailed presentation of the department's structure, mission, strategic priorities, and the Psychology PhD programme's integration with societal needs. The panel met extensively with the Dean of the School, programme directors, academic staff, external stakeholders, students, graduates, and administrative personnel. Sessions focused on the programme's structure, learning outcomes, delivery methods, physical resources, and quality assurance mechanisms. The day concluded with a tour of the university's facilities and a final meeting for discussion and clarification with institutional representatives. The EEC provided a clear summary of the Psychology PhD programme and its alignment with European standards of higher education. The EEC highlighted that they do not make any decisions regarding the accreditation of the programme, but merely provide their observations and recommendations to the CYQAA. The EEC confirmed that the School will have an opportunity to respond to the EEC's report.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Jan H. Kamphuis	Full Professor	University of Amsterdam
Andrew J. Bremner	Full Professor	University of Birmingham
Victoria Helen Southgate	Full Professor	University of Copenhagen
Andreas Paris	Clinical Psychologist	Cyprus Psychologists Registration Council
Andrea Constantinou	Graduate student	University of Cyprus

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.***

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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

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- *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.

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▪ 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:*
  o *selection criteria*
  o *intended learning outcomes*
  o *qualification awarded*
  o *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  o *pass rates*
  o *learning opportunities available to the students*
  o *graduate employment information*

In addition, the program has established mechanisms of transparency & communication to ensure that
  o Professional bodies validate program descriptions and outcomes.
  o Community leaders actively participate in ensuring that the program's public information is relevant and resonates with the local and societal context.
  o External auditors review public information for accuracy & consistency vis-à-vis the actual implementation of the program.
  o Industry-specific & societal information is regularly updated with expert inputs.
  o 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:*
  o *key performance indicators*
  o *profile of the student population*
  o *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  o *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  o *learning resources and student support available*
  o *career paths of graduates*
  o *industry trend analysis.*
  o *feedback mechanisms from external partners/stakeholders*

- o *data exchanges with professional networks*
- o *employer insights concerning career readiness*

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

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?*

- *How and to what extent are external stakeholders involved in the quality assurance process of the program?*

- *How is external stakeholder feedback gathered, analyzed and implemented,?*

- *In what ways do external stakeholders assist in making program information publicly available?*

- *How do external stakeholders contribute to evaluating graduate success in the labor market and obtaining feedback on employment outcomes?*

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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.

Policy for quality assurance

Even though no verbal presentation was provided and there was limited opportunity for the panel to ask questions, the PhD Psychology at the University of Limassol demonstrates a structured commitment to quality assurance. The University's policy framework governing academic programmes is formalised (albiet with elements that are under construction) and publicly available through institutional documents such as the UoL Charter, the Faculty Handbook, and the Graduate Student Handbook. These provide the formal basis for the internal quality assurance processes and are aligned with the requirements of the Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

The programme's quality assurance system is supported by robust institutional structures. The Quality Assurance and Internal Assessment Committee outlined in the UoL Charter is tasked with overseeing internal evaluations and ensuring alignment with national and European quality standards. Additionally, departmental and school councils play a defined role in programme oversight and development, thus ensuring that processes are embedded in the institutional fabric.

Faculty members are involved in the programme design and delivery and are supported in their quality assurance responsibilities through Faculty Handbook guidance, which highlights their role in maintaining academic standards, ensuring course alignment with learning outcomes, and engaging in ongoing programme review. Similarly, students have defined rights and responsibilities, including structured avenues to provide feedback and participate in university governance and programme development processes (for example through representation on school councils).

The panel gained a strong sense that the institution maintains a strong commitment to academic integrity and freedom. This is underpinned by its formal policy on academic misconduct and plagiarism, including the ethical use of generative AI tools in teaching and assessment, thus ensuring vigilance against academic fraud while integrating modern pedagogical approaches. Policies and practices at the University of Limassol also reflect an inclusive approach to education, supporting the rights of all students and staff regardless of background, and explicitly addressing tolerance and non-discrimination.

External stakeholders seem engaged in the development of the programme, with ongoing discussions particularly with professionals in the areas of educational psychology, child psychiatry, medical physics, and stroke rehabilitation. These stakeholders reportedly also contributed to aligning the programme with evolving needs in the locality and more widely, and expressed willingness and significant interest in providing access and resources to potential PhD students working in partnership between UoL and their respective organisations.

This quality assurance approach supports the development of an academically rigorous, ethically sound, and socially responsive PhD programme. The panel was particularly struck by the empowerment expressed by the departmental faculty regarding their opportunity and capability to develop and shape the development of doctoral programmes of research in their department.

Design, approval, ongoing monitoring and review

The PhD programme is described in terms of being under-development, and given the department context and its stage of development, is somewhat aspirational in nature. Nonetheless, the programme objectives are explicit and well-aligned with the institutional mission and broader societal needs. The programme integrates theoretical knowledge, research methods and skills, and professional ethical standards in psychological research. This is aligned with institutional priorities: the University's Charter and governance structure emphasise the development of research-led programmes responsive to the international research landscape.

The programme has clearly defined intended learning outcomes (ILOs) at the programme level and also for each course, visible in the course and study guides. These outcomes are coherently connected to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) descriptors and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. For example, students develop critical thinking, research design, communication, and ethical reasoning skills aligned with Level 8 of the EQF, covering advanced knowledge application, and research autonomy.

Students are involved in the ongoing development of the programme, both directly through structured feedback mechanisms (as outlined in the Graduate Handbook) and indirectly through reflections and evaluations built into course activities (e.g. interactive engagement in modules).

The design and review of the programme benefits from external expertise, largely at the level of discussion with external stakeholders regarding potential topics for PhD research. The design of taught elements of the programme is focussed on academic research skills, with limited level 8 content regarding scientific communication, scientific stakeholder engagement and the involvement of practitioners and experts-by-experience. The design of such features, if they were to be included formally in the PhD programme, would certainly benefit from input from external stakeholders.

The structure of the programme is designed to support smooth student progression through the PhD, with intermediate gating points related to successful completion of prerequisite courses, successful completion of the research proposal, and the dissertation data collection and write-up phases. There are some questions to be asked about the extent to which a wide range of different PhD projects with appropriate levels of ambition in collecting challenging datasets can fit into this highly structured model (e.g., for projects with challenging ethical review requirements, the structure of the programme could lead to significant delays outside of the students' control). Some level of flexibility would need to be built into this in order that there is a reasonable expectation that all different kinds of PhD projects could be completed within 3 years.

The programme encourages PhD students to gain experience of research programmes internationally by spending time in research-labs outside Cyprus. In the context of the junior faculty, and the developing national research environment in Cyprus it seems arguable that such a process should be a requirement more than a recommendation.

Formal approval processes for programme modifications are overseen by the Department Council and Senate, as detailed in the institutional charter. Monitoring is continuous and multidimensional: learning outcomes are updated based on evolving research in the discipline, emerging technologies (e.g., ethical use of generative AI), and feedback from students, alumni, and field professionals. The periodic review of the programme takes into account student workload, course effectiveness, and feedback from stakeholders, ensuring the programme remains up-to-date, relevant, and aligned with societal challenges such as inclusion, digital transformation, and mental health. This dynamic review process also supports the adaptation of new learning technologies and maintains coherence across

the curriculum. The programme exhibits alignment between its content, delivery, learning outcomes, and professional requirements, all of which are embedded in an actively maintained quality assurance cycle.

Public information

The University provides clear, accurate, up-to-date, and accessible information about its programmes through its official communication channels, including its website, student handbook, study guides, and programme documentation. The Graduate Student Handbook and Charter confirm that prospective and enrolled students are informed about admission criteria, programme structure, and assessment policies.

The learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods, and qualification awarded are clearly stated in each course's study guide.Although pass rates and graduate employment statistics are not yet systematically published online, this appears to be in development as part of the University's growing commitment to transparency. Nonetheless, the department is proactive in maintaining direct communication with students about performance expectations, progression rules, and available support services.

Information management

The University demonstrates a satisfactory approach to collecting and analysing data for the effective management of the PhDl Psychology. Through its Quality Assurance and Internal Assessment Committee, as outlined in the University Charter and Faculty Handbook, the institution collects a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) of programmes, including student profiles, progression and drop-out rates, student satisfaction, and graduate outcomes. However, during the visit only data related to student activity were mentioned, which limits the extent to which analytic insight could support a wider range of potential student support initiatives.

While disaggregated statistical data were not made available to the panel during the visit, documentation indicates that mechanisms are in place for ongoing monitoring, including internal surveys, structured course evaluations, and feedback collected during practicum placements. Students are actively involved in this process by completing course evaluations and engaging in feedback cycles tied to assignments and interactive learning activities.

Teaching and administrative staff participate in data review processes, identifying areas for improvement and adjusting course content or support services accordingly. This is further reinforced through periodic faculty reviews and Department Council discussions. The institution appears to respond to such data with concrete follow-up actions, including curriculum updates, technological integration, and faculty training.

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

- The programme shows a systematic and well-conceptualised approach to training PhD students in advanced research design and methods.

- Research ethics are deeply embedded in the programme, with repeated reference to relevant ethical guidelines and standards. This supports the development of students as ethically responsible researchers.

- The structured sequence of progression through the PhD programme offers a scaffolded approach to building research know-how. Students are supported from advanced research methods and literature review through to independent research design, data collection, analysis, and presentation ensuring research is rigorous, ethical, and practice-oriented where appropriate.

- Learning outcomes are clearly aligned with Level 8 of the EQF and the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, ensuring coherence between course content, assessment, and graduate competences

- Faculty members can benefit from a structured research support policy, including the possibility of €5,000 annual seed funding (€2k for conference attendance and €3k for approved research proposals). This likely contributes to the ambition for establishing the infrastructure and momentum required for supporting the vibrant research environments necessary for PhD students to thrive.

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 University has taken a positive first step with its policy on generative AI. Consider providing a standardized AI usage statement or disclaimer in all course syllabi (including in the thesis dissertation), alongside any assessment-specific guidance on AI usage, to ensure consistent expectations.

- Ensure that external information has detailed admissions criteria that are programme-appropriate.

- Engagement with external stakeholders should go beyond the current discussions of potential PhD-based research collaboration to consider discussions about programme content such that students of this PhD programme can be trained via a syllabus which is informed in appropriate approaches to engagement with experts by experience and patient consultation groups.

- We recommend that a period of study in research labs overseas be built into the programme as a mandatory requirement, and the appropriate resourcing arrangements be put in place to support this.

- We recommend a review of the structure of the programme and whether the 3 year arrangement with the key checkpoints in regard to course completion, successful proposal and PhD dissertation development and submission are appropriate to the wide range of different PhD projects which could be undertaken. The particular concern here is to build into the programme an appropriate level of flexibility such that students are not held up in their progress due to the interaction between progress points and factors outside their control such as hold-ups in ethical review.

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	Partially Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant

1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

2.2 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology
2.3 Practical training
2.4 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.*

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- *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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *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.

Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

The PhD programme is geared to 6-8 students, hence both teaching and assessment will be rather individualized, particularly in years 2 and 3.

The University provides ongoing guidance and support for students, including academic advising, and clear orientation materials in the Graduate Student Handbook and Dissertation Defense Guideline.

A culture of mutual respect and academic dialogue is fostered through specific assignments and timely instructor feedback.

Practical training

The programme demonstrates satisfactory integration of theoretical knowledge and practical training. Part of the first year is devoted to developing specific (data-analytic) skills, and core assignments in the second and third year tend to blend theoretical and practical aspects; in some phases predominantly theoretical (e.g., literature review), and others more practical (data analysis). The content of the programme is aligned with its intended learning outcomes, has a clear time schedule/ distribution, and ultimately (presumably) leads to the completion of a dissertation.

Assessment

The criteria for the method of assessment are published in advance. Assessments certainly allow students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcome has been achieved, particularly in years 2 and 3, where the outcome is a part of the actual dissertation. Mechanisms are in place for students to lodge complaints or appeals related to teaching, learning, and assessment, as described in institutional policies.

Assessments are aligned with intended learning outcomes and vary by module to reflect different competencies. The first introductory year prepares and equips the student, providing content on epistemology, history of psychology, qualitative and quantitative analysis, ethics, etc. It culminates in Advanced Topics on Psychological Research in which faculty members show-case their personal research. Performance in each of these courses is evaluated in terms of student participation (20%), proposal (40%) and respective target product-outcome (40%). Of note, the evaluation of participation incentivises students to take an active role in creating the learning process.

The second and third year are devoted to subsequent stages of dissertation writing and presentation. In these years, assessments are on a Pass/ Fail basis, and require that the student produces concepts/ proposals and ultimately the respective target outcome. Examples include the development of the dissertation proposal, literature review, and presentation to the dissertation committee. To a large extent, progress will be evaluated by the individual advisor, guided by the University of Limassol Dissertation Manual and Templates.

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Criterion outcomes include a) presentation of work at an international conference, b) submission of at least 1 manuscript for international peer review.

Strengths

- Clear learning outcomes and academic rigor: Each course clearly defines its CILOs (Course Intended Learning Outcomes), which align with doctoral-level expectations (e.g., PSY809, PSY808, PSY802). Courses such as PSY809 and PSY808 support research independence, methodological precision, and academic self-direction, critical at EQF Level 8.
- Comprehensive coverage of methodology: The curriculum includes both quantitative (PSY803, PSY807) and qualitative methods (PSY806) at an advanced level. Inclusion of mixed methods, NVivo, grounded theory, and neuroscience data analysis (PSY807) ensures students are exposed to a wide methodological toolkit.
- Focus on research progression: The courses demonstrate a clear progression pathway from theoretical foundation (PSY802), to proposal development (PSY808), to data collection (PSY810), and ultimately thesis submission (PSY813, PSY814). The dissertation structure is scaffolded and allows for tailored supervision with regular milestone check-ins (biweekly).
- Contemporary and interdisciplinary focus: Courses such as PSY804 expose students to current trends, interdisciplinary issues, and real-world challenges across subfields (e.g., neurorehab, inclusion, adolescent psychopathology).
- Emphasis on writing and scientific communication: Courses like PSY805 and PSY813 prioritise scientific communication, manuscript drafting, and responding to reviewer feedback, which are key components in preparing students for academia and publication.

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.

- There is no mention of training in open science, reproducibility, digital collaboration platforms.
- Despite the growing relevance of digital research ecosystems and hybrid learning, the programme currently shows limited integration of advanced digital tools to support collaborative and modern research practices. Tools such as qualitative coding tools, machine learning platforms for data analysis, cloud-based collaborative writing tools, and virtual lab simulations can significantly enhance both the research output and student engagement. Additionally, offering elements of online supervision or peer research forums can support students. The University is suggested to encourage digital literacy and digital ethics training as part of research methods modules. Consider piloting a digital research lab or virtual supervision hub.
- Nearly all core dissertation-linked courses (PSY808–814) are assessed on a pass/fail basis, which may not capture the depth of doctoral progression or enable early identification of academic underperformance. A suggestion around this is to include at least formative detailed grading rubrics or evaluative comments for internal benchmarking.
- Although individual supervision is robust, peer-based learning (collaborative workshops, peer reviews, journal clubs) is either optional or minimally integrated (only mentioned in PSY805/PSY804).
- Most research progression is tracked through biweekly supervisor meetings. While valuable, this places significant responsibility on individual supervisors and may limit diverse feedback or early detection of student distress or disengagement.

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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	Partially compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Partially compliant

3. **Teaching staff** *(ESG 1.5)*

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

3.1 **Teaching staff recruitment and development**

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*

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

- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*

- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*

- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*

- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*

- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*

- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*

- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*

- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*

- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*

- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*

- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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- *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

The PhD program contains a substantial taught element occupying the 1st and 2nd semester. The University ensures that the teaching faculty for the PhD in Psychology is qualified and selected through ostensibly transparent and rigorous recruitment processes, as outlined in the institutional Charter and Faculty Handbook. The academic staff hold relevant doctoral degrees across a number of areas within psychology, can teach courses and have research experience appropriate to the supervision of PhD research in areas, including Neuroscience and Cognitive Psychology, Clinical and Organizational Psychology, Applied Psychology and Innovative Methods and Psychology and Public Health.

The University maintains clear processes for appointment and promotion. The Charter stipulates that teaching excellence, scholarly research, and contributions to the institution are key criteria in promotion decisions. Opportunities for academic development are provided through access to research support (e.g., internal funding, seed grants, technical infrastructure), and although almost the entire faculty is junior, there is evidence of an individual commitment to research output in publication lists.

Student evaluations of teaching are conducted at the end of each course. These evaluations assess both content delivery and interaction quality. While it is not yet fully clear how this feedback systematically informs staff and teaching development plans, faculty are expected to reflect on student evaluations, which can influence internal reviews and ongoing training initiatives.

Employment conditions recognise teaching as a core academic responsibility, with balanced workloads between teaching and research time. Nevertheless, it is not clear that teaching staff currently have sufficient time for research activities given the high workload related to teaching and administration. Sufficient research time and activity is

especially important for a department undertaking PhD training in which an inspiring and vibrant research environment is central to the development of the PhD candidate.

Teaching staff number and status

The number and structure of the teaching staff assigned to the programme is satisfactory. The core teaching team comprises permanent academic staff supported by a small number of expertise-specific adjuncts and visiting professionals. The balance between full-time and part-time instructors is appropriate, with permanent faculty maintaining primary responsibility for course coordination, assessment, and student support.

The ratio of visiting to permanent staff is within acceptable standards, ensuring that institutional knowledge, academic continuity, and curriculum coherence are preserved.

The workload of faculty appears high and this is unsurprising given the additional burdens associated with creating material on top of business-as-usual delivery. This is of particular importance to consider carefully as the junior academics who make up the large proportion of faculty are also expected to be starting up their independent research careers.

Synergies of teaching and research

Faculty members aim to combine their teaching duties with research in various fields within psychology. Furthermore, the University has ambitions for high-level research and aims to promote a research culture through seed funding, infrastructure support (e.g., neuroimaging software, VR tools), and interdisciplinary collaborations.

External collaboration is also encouraged. Staff members engage with practitioners, professional associations, and academic partners both in Cyprus and abroad. During the visit we had the opportunity to talk with faculty currently located in the UK, Australia & the USA. The core faculty have close ties with various stakeholders, including schools, social and welfare, and medical institutions. It is evident from our discussions with these stakeholders that there would be opportunities for PhD students to conduct research projects jointly supervised by faculty and stakeholder institutions.

Given the high workload of the core faculty, questions arise as to the capacity of the faculty to engage in sufficient research activity to ensure the desired synergy between research and teaching, and research and dissertation research. Nevertheless, it is recognized that a PhD program will ultimately be necessary to create the synergy between teaching and research that the department desires, especially given the high workload of the core faculty.

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

- The teaching staff possess doctoral-level qualifications and professional expertise in psychology, ensuring alignment with the programme's teaching objectives.
- Existing connections between the core faculty and external stakeholders appear strong and seem to provide opportunities for PhD research environments in which both sides are invested in the success of the PhD student.
- There is a plan to submit an EU Doctoral Training Network application for PhD studentships that, if successful, will create an international community and training opportunities for PhDs.

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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.

- Currently only two faculty members are employed at Associate and Full Professor level. It is recommended that PhD supervision should always be led by a faculty member at Associate level or above, who can guide the assistant professor through the process of PhD supervision and that a PhD supervision training course be implemented for staff who have not supervised a PhD student to completion, either by experienced faculty members at University of Limassol or staff attend courses held at other universities. Sufficient time should be allocated to mentorship.

- The University should ensure that faculty have sufficient research time to engage actively in research so that a dynamic research environment can be created in which PhD students can thrive

- Staff should make efforts to be involved in international research networks. We recommend extensive efforts be made to establish networks through staff mobility periods at other institutions, funded by the university or ERASMUS+ staff mobility funding. This will lay the groundwork for future Doctoral Training Network applications and increase chances of a successful application.

- In many EU countries and beyond, it is an expectation that PhD students gain experience with teaching during the course of their PhD. This can be beneficial both for the student in terms of future employment opportunities, and for the institution, and promotes synergies between research-active teachers and course content. We recommend that the department considers ways in which they could integrate PhD students into teaching at the undergraduate or Masters level.

- We suggest that careful consideration is required to ensure that workloads for the early career academics are balanced in a way to support the development of programmes of research which put in place adequate foundations for strong research career development. This is important to ensure a dynamic research environment for future PhD students.

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	Non-compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Non-compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Partially Compliant

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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*

o *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.

The University has developed a comprehensive and research-intensive PhD programme in Psychology, aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Level 8. The programme is structured over three academic years (180 ECTS), with instruction in both Greek and English. Admission criteria are clearly defined, requiring a Master's degree in Psychology or a related field, a research proposal, academic references, and proof of English proficiency.

From the onsite documentation and review, it is evident that the University emphasises research excellence, ethical scholarship, internationalisation, and interdisciplinary approaches. The University provides governance structures, including the Dissertation Advisory and Examining Committees, and maintains dissertation defense and evaluation procedures. Furthermore, facilities, student support, and quality assurance mechanisms are well-documented.

The programme defines a clear academic path consisting of core courses, a thesis proposal, and the final dissertation. Students are required to maintain a minimum average grade of 75–80% to remain in good academic standing. Student performance is continuously monitored through course evaluations, proposal defenses, and

progress reviews. Failing to meet standards results in academic probation or review by the Academic Committee. The University recognises prior learning and experience, including study results from foreign higher education institutions, in accordance with national and international frameworks. Recognition practices are aligned with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and are supported by cooperation with national and European quality assurance bodies. Diploma supplements conform to European and international standards and support graduate mobility and further academic or professional engagement.

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

- The program shows robust and elaborate admission criteria. The admission process involves rigorous screening, including a panel interview and assessment of a research proposal, ensuring academic quality and research readiness. It follows a well-defined three-phase structure, including coursework, dissertation proposal, and research/dissertation defense, with specific ECTS allocations.
- Furthermore, the program showcases an international and interdisciplinary focus, encouraging international conference participation and journal submissions, contributing to global research networks. There is a transparent and structured process that includes both internal and external examiners, public presentation, and detailed evaluation rubric.
- The student handbook highlights a range of support services, including counseling, mentoring, career guidance, and a student-centered learning philosophy. Students receive a diploma supplement in line with European and international standards, including learning outcomes and study context. Strong emphasis can also be seen, in terms of ethical conduct, academic integrity, and provisions for special accommodations
- Applicants must have a relevant Master's degree (or an exceptional bachelor's degree), strong academic background, evidence of quantitative skills, and a clear research proposal. A rigorous interview process with the PhD Faculty Committee assesses readiness and supervisor matching. Recognition of prior learning, including study at foreign institutions, aligns with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The University cooperates with ENIC/NARIC and maintains fair and transparent recognition processes.
- There are published and enforced regulations regarding student progression. Students must complete specific ECTS milestones, including coursework (80 ECTS), thesis proposal (15 ECTS), and final dissertation (85 ECTS). Performance is monitored, and mechanisms exist for academic probation and resubmission policies.

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 programme's current visibility and accessibility for international applicants could be significantly strengthened. At present, there is limited evidence of a targeted internationalisation strategy or bespoke support structures specifically tailored to international students. Furthermore, providing dedicated orientation sessions for non-Cypriot or international students, visa and relocation support, and accessible pre-arrival information (e.g., housing, healthcare, cultural adaptation) would significantly improve the experience and retention of students from diverse backgrounds. The University is suggested to develop and implement a targeted internationalisation strategy that includes international marketing campaigns, digital outreach in key regions, and the establishment of a dedicated international student services team.
- While the programme documentation acknowledges the existence of relevant infrastructure, it lacks comprehensive detail regarding the specific research tools, psychological laboratories, testing environments,

software platforms, or data collection instruments available to PhD candidates. In research-intensive programmes, especially in psychology, access to further well-equipped laboratories, qualitative/quantitative data analysis software, and clinical or field testing environments is critical. The absence of a detailed inventory may lead to uncertainty among prospective students about the feasibility and scope of their intended research. The University could include a detailed section in programme materials outlining available laboratory facilities, specialist software, and research equipment. Consider offering virtual tours or lab showcase sessions during open days and online admissions events.

- While the academic standards of the programme are commendable, there is a missed opportunity in not explicitly linking doctoral training with post-doctoral career trajectories, both academic and non-academic. There is limited mention of structured partnerships with industry, NGOs, public sector organisations, or international research institutes that could offer internships, collaborative research projects, or placements. Furthermore, career development workshops, grant writing training, or post-doctoral fellowship guidance are not currently formalised within the curriculum. The University should attempt to establish a formal career development framework that integrates employability-focused activities, post-doctoral pathway mapping, and collaborative agreements with industry partners. Create a dedicated research and innovation hub to support grant applications, knowledge transfer, and impact-driven research projects.

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	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

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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.*

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?*

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- *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.)?*

- *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 University offers a well-structured doctoral programme, including a research-intensive learning component. The institution operates a physical campus with access to classrooms, IT labs, and a small library, supplemented by an e-library and remote access to academic databases. Physical resources are maintained to a good standard, with opening hours that accommodate working students.

The digital infrastructure includes access to online journals, e-books, and tools like MATLAB (as seen in PSY803, PSY806, PSY807). The University's support systems are documented in the Graduate Student Handbook, which outlines both academic and personal support offerings, including counseling, disability accommodations, and academic advising.

The teaching team includes subject-matter experts, many of whom are newly recruited with research specialisation, and students are paired with supervisors aligned to their research topic. There are also advisors and administrative staff available for academic and pastoral support. Research mentoring, and personal well-being services are in place, though specialist mental health services remain limited.

The University is undergoing expansion and anticipates a new campus by 2027–2028, with the intention of scaling capacity and resource offerings in line with increasing doctoral admissions.

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

- Teaching and Learning Resources: The digital library infrastructure is robust, offering 24/7 remote access to full-text databases, journals, research repositories, and electronic textbooks, which is critical for doctoral research. Upcoming integration with Scopus and the Cyprus national library access system will substantially boost research capacity and scholarly connectivity.

- Core research methodology courses (e.g., PSY803, PSY806, PSY807) are aligned with international doctoral standards, offering exposure to advanced quantitative and qualitative analysis tools and programming platforms.
- The research pathway is scaffolded through courses such as PSY810 (data collection), PSY811 (interpretation), PSY812 (presentation lab), and PSY815 (dissertation defense), creating a coherent academic journey with built-in milestones.
- Physical Resources: The existing campus includes computer labs, printing services, photocopying, and Wi-Fi-enabled learning spaces. Library facilities, while modest in physical size, are complemented by an e-library and digital catalog that supports advanced research needs. Students can borrow physical books, use on-campus terminals, and access remote digital collections. Facilities are well-maintained.
- There are ambitions to support PhD research involving equipment-intensive paradigms, including virtual reality, neuroscience analysis and data collection, and facilities in this regard are under construction although we were not able to see these on the visit.
- Human Support Resources: Students benefit from a multi-layered advising system: a primary academic supervisor, program directors, departmental administrative support, and the Graduate Affairs Office. There is a growing team of student-facing support professionals, including staff in instructional design, IT, counselling, and inclusive education. Specialised assistance is available for students with disabilities or specific learning needs. Regular check-ins and supervisory meetings are required across the dissertation timeline (e.g., biweekly in PSY810), ensuring continual academic oversight.
- Student Support: UoL offers orientation programmes, career guidance, and counselling services. Writing support and training on how to use digital tools (e.g., for data analysis and referencing) are also available. Policies for students with disabilities ensure equal access to learning and assessment, including accommodations like extended time or alternative formats.
- Although not yet extensive, student mobility is supported through recognition of foreign study under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and students are encouraged to attend international conferences as part of their dissertation training.

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.

- Limited Physical Library Holdings: While the digital library is strong, the physical library remains limited in psychology-specific holdings. It is suggested that the University continues expanding the physical collection of psychology texts and journals. Ensure the upcoming integration with Scopus and the Cyprus Library Access System is prioritised and completed as planned.
- Fragmented Communication of Student Services: Students are informed of services through various platforms (portal, handbook, faculty emails), which may lead to inconsistent awareness or underuse of resources. It is suggested that the University consolidates all student services (academic, personal, IT, and well-being) into a centralised digital dashboard or single portal with a searchable index and contact directory.
- Mental Health and Well-being Support Capacity: Current well-being services rely heavily on advisors and one wellness officer. There is a lack of dedicated mental health professionals for doctoral students who may face isolation, stress, or burnout. The University is advised to employ an additional registered mental health

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practitioner and consider establishing a peer-mentorship programme for doctoral candidates, particularly those balancing studies with employment or caregiving.

● Resource Planning for Future Scaling: The institution anticipates growth, but detailed contingency planning for short-term increases in student numbers is lacking. It is thus suggested that a scaling plan for academic supervision ratios is formulated that will also include additional research facilities, and enhanced digital resources. This will ensure transitional resource allocation is in place before the new campus opens.

● Physical research facilities: The research profiles of many of the faculty members proposed for PhD research supervision (especially under the "Neuroscience and Cognitive Psychology" topics among others imply significant requirements of equipment and software for supporting PhD research on this programme (e.g., VR, neuroscience methods). Although there are early stage gestures towards establishing such infrastructure (e.g., neuroscience analysis tools, a VR suite under construction), these are at an early stage of development. We recommend that a full analysis of these equipment needs and physical space requirements be carried out in order to present a more compelling case that staff research programmes can be supported in the context of PhD research.

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	Partially 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:*
  - o *regular meetings*
  - o *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - o *support for writing research papers*
  - o *participation in conferences*

- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*

- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*

- *Are the criteria reflected in dissertation samples?*

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.

Selection criteria and requirements

The University has established clear, tiered admission criteria for the PhD in Psychology, consistent with EQF Level 8 standards. Candidates must hold a relevant Master's degree (or, exceptionally, a First Class Honours Bachelor's degree with research experience), submit a detailed research proposal, a statement of purpose, academic references, and proof of English proficiency. Selection involves a formal interview with the PhD Programme Committee and evaluation for supervisor compatibility.

The stages of the programme are well-defined: Year 1: Coursework, research methods, ethics, and proposal preparation (ECTS 55–60); Year 2: Data collection and preliminary analysis; Year 3: Dissertation writing, submission, and defense

There is a minimum duration of three years (180 ECTS) and a maximum of five years, with structured progression checkpoints and ECTS-based credit allocation. Examinations are embedded in the form of proposal defense (PSY808),

presentation labs (PSY812), and final dissertation defense (PSY815). The criteria for obtaining the degree are explicit: completion of all course modules, approval of a written dissertation, participation in at least one international conference, and submission of an article to a peer-reviewed journal.

Candidates ideally have a Master's degree in Psychology, or a related field (comply or explain). Moreover, they have to broadly indicate a minimum of two advisors they would like to collaborate with, and satisfactorily pass a personal interview.

Proposal and dissertation

The proposal and subsequent dissertation are co-developed with the Advisory committee. The submitted thesis can either be in the form of 3 essays, equivalent to a thesis by chapter PhD, or a monograph. 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.

The University provides formal guidance for dissertation proposal development and final submission. The course PSY808 (Proposal Writing) scaffolds students through the structure, scope, ethics, and methodological design of their research. Each student must submit a full proposal to their Dissertation Advisory Committee for review and formal approval prior to proceeding with data collection.

The University's Dissertation Defense Guidelines include specifications on dissertation chapters and structure; formatting and binding; inclusion of originality declarations; library submission requirements; and use of plagiarism detection software, with consequences for violations explicitly stated

While there is no minimum word count noted in the documentation, the requirement for peer-reviewed publication and presentation at an international conference implies a desire for a high level of rigour.

Supervision and committees

The supervision structure is multilayered and follows best practices. Each student is assigned a Lead Supervisor, based on subject match; a dissertation Advisory Committee (DAC) for the proposal stage; and a Dissertation Examining Committee (DEC) for the defense stage.

Committee composition is governed by transparent procedures, including the DAC which includes the supervisor and internal experts. Furthermore the DEC includes the supervisor(s), an internal chair, a UoL faculty member from another department, and two external members from other institutions, ensuring independent academic judgment

Supervisor duties include biweekly supervisory meetings, feedback on drafts, progress monitoring and milestone tracking, Support for conference presentation and publication, and ethics review and methodological consultation

However, no upper limit is formally stated on the number of supervisees per chairperson, though the supervision appears personalized.

The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee and examining committee are clearly described and in line with international best practice. Moreover, guidelines stipulate that the Academic Committee be chaired by a faculty member who is at least at the associate professor rank. No specific number is provided for the maximum number of PhD student may be supervised by the same chair simultaneously.

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

- The external stakeholders present during the site visit indicated substantial and credible investment/ motivation in hosting PHD students. These placements have clear societal relevance (e.g. psycho-oncology, Stroke Unit, etc.). There is clear potential for win-win exchanges.
- Application procedures, prerequisites, and interview processes are clearly published and aligned with doctoral standards.
- There is a clear research progression pathway. From proposal (PSY808) through data collection (PSY810), analysis (PSY811), presentation (PSY812), and defense (PSY815), each course is purpose-built to support dissertation development and completion.
- Dissertation Defense Guidelines are comprehensive, detailing eligibility, committee composition, defense format, evaluation rubrics, and post-defense submission requirements.
- There is mandatory international engagement. All candidates must present their research at a peer-reviewed international conference and submit a paper to a journal prior to graduation—promoting research quality, visibility, and relevance.

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.

- According to the materials provided, The Academic Committee is chaired by a faculty member who is at the associate professor rank (or beyond), a guideline we support. Currently however, the program has only 1-2 such faculty members, which significantly constrains the choice options for the students as well as the content domain for doctoral work.
- While the curriculum appears strong, it lacks explicit reference to benchmarking against international PhD-level programmes or frameworks (e.g., APA, BPS, or European Doctoral Programmes).
- To ensure that the research component of the PhD is aligned with international standards, the program may consider including a requirement that one member of the dissertation committee be external to Cyprus.
- Lack of Dissertation Word Count and Publication Format Standards: There is no formally stated minimum or maximum word count or clear policy on dissertation formatting beyond structural expectations. The suggestion includes adopting and publishing minimum standards for dissertation length, chapter content, and formatting. Consider providing templates or examples aligned with APA or equivalent scientific style guides.
- No Formal Cap on Supervisee Load per Faculty: There is no policy limiting the number of PhD students supervised simultaneously by a single faculty member, potentially risking supervisor overload and diminished student support. The University should introduce a maximum supervisee ratio per academic year (e.g., 5 PhD candidates per primary supervisor) and monitor staff workloads annually to ensure effective student mentoring.
- Minimal Guidance on Dissertation-to-Workforce Relevance: There is insufficient analysis of the labour market value of the PhD outside academia or structured links to public, private, or NGO sectors. It is suggested that the University provides a formal section in the dissertation guidelines that requires students to articulate potential societal, economic, or professional applications of their work. Consider adding applied research seminars or workshops on knowledge translation and impact.

ΔΙΠΑΕ ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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- Peer Review and Supervisor Feedback Practices Could Be Strengthened: While peer feedback and supervisor interactions are frequent, they are not uniformly documented or structured in a transparent feedback system. Implement semesterly progress reports from both students and supervisors, using structured templates reviewed by programme directors. Add peer review workshops to support inter-cohort critique and scholarly collaboration.
- Need for Plagiarism Policy Integration Across the Curriculum: While plagiarism checks are required at dissertation submission, earlier integration of academic integrity training is limited in documentation. The University is suggested to introduce formal workshops on academic integrity, referencing, and responsible conduct of research in Year 1 (e.g., in PSY802 or PSY803), including the use of plagiarism detection software for interim work.
- Formal arrangements for collaborations with stakeholders should be spelled out - including in terms of publication rights and authorship etc.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Compliant
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
6.3	Supervision and committees	Partially 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.

We appreciated the warm welcome that was extended to us, as well as the candid sharing of the information we requested to make an assessment. We were struck by the energy and investment of the faculty, and especially by the leadership of the psychology department. Based on the provided materials and interviews during the site visit, we would like to offer the following observations, keeping in mind the Rector's invitations to make our comments constructive and development-oriented.

The University of Limassol's PhD in Psychology programme demonstrates elements that align with an international-level doctoral education. These include a structured curriculum, alignment with EQF Level 8 descriptors, the presence of dissertation committees, a public defense process, and requirements for international dissemination of

research through publication and conference participation. The emergent quality assurance policies, as described, are coherent and show a willingness for internal review and institutional learning. Furthermore, academic integrity is taken seriously, and the faculty and leadership demonstrate commitment and enthusiasm for growing a strong research culture within the institution.

Nonetheless, when viewed holistically and against the broader expectations of doctoral-level education in Europe, the programme does not comply with expected standards. Across several core areas, including supervision infrastructure, faculty capacity, dissertation standards, and integration with the wider research and employment landscape, there are systemic limitations that require revision before the programme can be considered robust, sustainable, and internationally comparable.

The most critical area of concern lies in the current faculty composition. With only one to two faculty members at Associate or Full Professor level, the ability to deliver sustained, high-quality doctoral supervision is fundamentally constrained. This issue is compounded by the absence of a formal policy on maximum supervisee loads, risking the overextension of existing faculty and compromising supervision quality. PhD supervision, particularly at this level of academic rigor, cannot be dependent on the goodwill or availability of a small number of junior staff members, no matter how motivated. There is also a lack of formalised mentoring or training for new supervisors, which raises concerns about consistency and best practice in guiding doctoral students.

In terms of research infrastructure, while the University has demonstrated investment in digital resources and is developing its physical facilities, there remains insufficient clarity regarding access to essential psychology-specific research tools, labs, and data collection environments. The absence of a detailed, published inventory of available research equipment and environments limits transparency and raises questions about whether all proposed PhD research projects could be adequately supported, especially those requiring specialised testing or clinical observation facilities.

Although the dissertation pathway is well scaffolded in terms of module structure (e.g., proposal development, data collection, analysis, defense), the absence of explicit requirements for dissertation length, formatting standards, and impact reflection undermines the programme's ability to ensure comparability and quality across student outputs. There is no integration of labour-market relevance or applied outcomes in the dissertation process, and no clear articulation of how the doctoral qualification translates into non-academic career paths. This an omission that significantly limits the programme's utility in a diversified, real-world professional context.

The curriculum includes methodological and analytical rigor. However, there is no consistent integration of open science principles, reproducibility standards, or digital collaboration platforms that are increasingly central to modern doctoral training. Moreover, academic integrity training is treated as a final checkpoint rather than a developmental thread implemented throughout the research process, thus missing the opportunity to instill these values early and sustainably.

The peer learning culture is underdeveloped. While individual supervision is a strength, the programme lacks structured peer engagement mechanisms, such as journal clubs, collaborative research groups, or peer-review workshops, that are hallmarks of high-functioning doctoral environments. This absence limits opportunities for academic socialisation and lateral learning, both of which are essential to doctoral progression and scholarly resilience.

Although selection procedures appear rigorous on paper, including proposal review and interview, there is a lack of international benchmarking in the programme's academic expectations. The absence of reference to frameworks like those of the APA, BPS, or European Doctoral Programmes undermines the ability to evaluate whether the programme truly meets global standards.

In summary, while the University of Limassol has made good progress and displays clear institutional and management commitment to develop a strong doctoral training ecosystem, the current PhD in Psychology programme does not, in our appraisal, comply with standards. Critical elements, including a stable supervisory structure, clarity on research infrastructure, benchmarking of dissertation output, integration of labour-market relevance, and formal academic feedback mechanism, are either insufficiently developed or entirely absent. The programme is currently a promising and ambitious work-in-progress. In the opinion of this panel, the excellent leadership of the department and the promising scientific profiles of the early career faculty place the department in an excellent position to establish a strong PhD programme in the future, should the suggestions for improvements outlined in this report be tackled in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Jan H. Kamphuis	
Andrew J. Bremner	
Victoria Helen Southgate	
Andreas Paris	
Andrea Constantinou	

Date: 4/3/25