Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report
(E-learning programme of study)

● Higher Education Institution:

   University of Nicosia

● Town: Nicosia

● School/Faculty (if applicable): Medical School

● Department/ Sector: Primary Care and Population Health

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

   In Greek:

   Δημόσια Υγεία (1,5 **έτη**, 90 ECTS, **Μάστερ**, **Εξ αποστάσεως**)

   In English:

   Public Health (1,5 years, 90 ECTs, Master of Public Health, E-learning

● Language(s) of instruction: English

● Programme's status: Currently operating

● Concentrations (if any):

In Greek: Concentrations
In English: Concentrations

A. Introduction

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the University of Nicosia (UNIC) on the 20th of February, 2023. Four members were present in person (Prof. Tea Lallukka/ Chair, Prof. Sabine Siesling, dr. Filippos Filippidis, Stefanos Cheilidis) and one member joined the meeting online (dr. Teresa Guasch).

The EEC met with members of teaching and administrative staff in person, as well as with four current students of the programme via Zoom (the fifth student could not participate in the discussion due to IT problems).

Below is the detailed agenda of the day, which was slightly modified during the day to accommodate some longer discussions on certain topics. The onsite visit to the premises was cancelled due to time constraints.

9:30 – 10:00

A meeting with the Head of the Institution and the Head or/and members of the Internal Evaluation Committee.

10:00 – 11:00

A meeting with the Head of the relevant department and the programme(s) Coordinator(s).

> Short presentations of:
> o The School's / Department's structure
> o The feasibility study of the programme(s)
> o The curriculum (i.e. philosophy, allocation of courses per semester, weekly content of each course, teaching methodologies, admission criteria for prospective students, student assessment, final exams)

11:00 - 11:10

Coffee Break

11:10 – 12:10

Methodology and equipment used in teaching and learning (i.e. software, hardware, materials, online platforms, teaching material, evaluation methods, projects, samples of written examinations / thesis)
SWOT analysis and degree of compliance with the CYQAA standards.

12:10 – 13:00

A meeting only with students or/and their representatives.

13:00 – 14:00
Working lunch of the EEC, with the CYQAA Officer only

14:00 – 16:00

Discussion on the content of each course (ongoing and under development) as well as brief presentations about the background of the teachers.

16:00 – 16:45

A meeting only with members of the administrative staff.

On site visit to the premises of the institution (i.e. library, computer labs, research facilities) was cancelled due to time constraints.

17:15 – 17:45

Exit discussion

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University
Dr Filippos Filippidis	Senior Lecturer in Public Health	Imperial College London, UK
Prof dr. Sabine Siesling	Professor of Outcomes Research and Personalised Cancer Care	University of Twente, The Netherlands
Prof dr. Tea Lallukka (chair)	Professor of Medical Sociology, Head of the Department of Public Health	University of Helsinki, Finland
Dr Teresa Guasch	Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Education	Open University of Catalonia (UOC), Spain
Stefanos Cheilidis	Student representative	University of Cyprus, 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:*
   o *has a formal status and is publicly available*
   o *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
   o *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
   o *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
   o *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
   o *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

1.2 **Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review**

Standards

● *The programme of study:*
   o *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
   o *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
   o *benefits from external expertise*
   o *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)*
   o *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
   o *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*

- o *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
- o *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
- o *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
- o *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*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *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*
- o *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

- ● *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - 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*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- ● *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - 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*

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

Findings

Based on the Rector's overview of the University of Nicosia (UNIC), the UNIC has a strong international outlook with joint degrees and distance learning (DL) courses, which form a strong and solid basis for the Master in Public Health (MPH) programme. The MPH is part of the Medical Faculty at the UNIC, the first Medical Faculty in Cyprus, with more than 1000 students from around the world, producing the largest number of publications. The university is private and thus it is not financially supported by the government and is fully dependent on the tuition fees of the students.

The Medical School has autonomy and has been recently merged with the Veterinary School and the School of Life and Health Sciences. This could benefit the MPH in the long run, e.g. in terms of more students in different courses.

The Medical School has 3 pillars, which are also followed by the MPH:

1.   Education

2.   Research

3.   Contribution to society

Research questions and demands from society are obtained through the following routes:

1.   Politics (eg. COVID C-MOR).

This is achieved through staff who link with politics, governmental bodies, the board of the NHS and developers of evidence based medicine/guidelines. Close interaction is in place with the surveillance unit of the Ministry of Health, who monitor health from Cyprus and mass vaccinations programmes (UN staff and third country individuals).

2.   Students ideas in support of societal challenges

In example there is fundraising support initiated from the UNIC for refugees in collaboration with students.

3.   Citizens science

Collaboration with patients societies and advocates are frequently performed:

- Patients can act as part of the multidisciplinary project team e.g projects on rheumatology (including patients society, technical and medical school, the mobile clinic and the epidemiology (Public health).
- Patients can act as patient representatives in an international advisory board.
- And through primary care, patient concerns which are mentioned are taken back in the curriculum and research through the department of Primary Care.

In total, there are 29 distance learning programs at the UNIC (one BSc and the rest MSc). There are three distant learning MSc programmes managed by the Department of Primary Care and Population Health (PCPH). Overall, two thirds of the students are from abroad, being Greek in the vast majority. In the MPH, the students are from around the world.

The PCPH consists of 15 full time research and teaching staff. A total of 48 staff is contributing. The ratio between students and teachers is 1.9:1.

Institutional members of EUPHA and ASPHER (memberships and advisory roles).

The MPH started in 2018. The whole MPH program can be completed in 18 months full-time over three semesters, or alternatively part-time in up to 4 years, which can be expanded in case of special circumstances with a maximum of 1 year to 5 years in total.

Each semester offers three 10 ECTS courses, and the entire degree is then 90 ECTS. The curriculum consists of 6 compulsory courses (semester 1 and 2) and one compulsory course in semester 3. Then the student can choose from a list of elective courses or can choose to do a research project (Master's thesis). Both tracks are in place, but most of the students choose the research track. Of the list of elective courses, 4 out of 9 courses have not been delivered yet and are in a preparation phase. Two courses on biostatistics are not in the curriculum, but might be followed by the students as extra modules.

The programme coordinator reviews content to avoid overlap in courses. This includes reviewing the different tasks, to make sure that there is no overlap between deadlines, not too many similar tasks and so on.

The curriculum is mapped against UK Faculty of PH, ASPHER and other international standards and core competencies by international PH stakeholders.

The main method to advertise the programme is via Google.

Students:

Target is people who wish to have a more in depth theoretical background and perform research in the field of Public Health. The MPH does not offer the option of an internship. Most graduates come from medical and allied health professional backgrounds, such as nursing or nutrition, but also biology or education. Variation in background knowledge can be a challenge, as some have no prior knowledge on statistics, methods or the substance areas. Most students, however, are mature students, and they have to provide a personal statement justifying their reasons to apply to the programme.

~15-20 students are enrolled annually to the programme. Many of them study part-time. Part-timers work e.g. as clinicians that enables them to deepen their knowledge and finance their studies. Maximum number to be enrolled per year is 30, with more students the classes should be split.

There are two tracks currently:

1. Research and
2. Theoretical

Academic mentor advises appropriately for both full-time as part-time students.

Courses:

The courses are described with many learning outcomes, which are not all defined according to the standards as being measurable. Every course is accompanied by a list of literature, which is for some courses somewhat outdated. This can be related to the availability of the material as ebooks.

The introductory 511 course starts "from scratch", so it does not assume prior knowledge. IT offers a theoretical construct and the student is able to read and judge a scientific paper. Diseases are approached multi-factorial. The course offers additional reading resources for those who may need additional background knowledge.

The course 513 used to be in the second semester but is now replaced in the first semester. It is very wide, as it focuses on both health promotion and disease prevention and maintenance of population health. Currently, there is no specific module on health inequalities in any of the required courses, although health inequalities are a major or the most important public health issue – there is no public health when there are inequalities, and they affect the health of the population and health care system. If the students do not understand and learn the causes of causes there is a danger that inequalities even widen, if e.g. health promotion actions are targeted not considering inequality. While e.g. health behaviours contribute to health they are shaped by socioeconomic background.

In other words, the courses of the first semester should be started or preceded by a module on health inequality as otherwise health promotion could even only promote health of those who are already better off. Students should at the very early phase of their studies learn about inequalities, social gradient in health and how large differences there are in health, morbidity and life expectancy between different population groups and between countries. Then they could proceed in the courses on disease prevention and health promotion, such as MPH-513. Safeguarding and maintaining health and wellbeing of the population can only be achieved if they are familiar with social determinants of health. Thus, if high-class highly educated people target health promotion intervention to increase e.g. physical activity, but without appreciating the causes of causes, the goals of an intervention may not be achieved and health inequalities may even widen. Course participants are taught about equity, and inequality but as the course comprises a variety of topics, it is a bit worrying if they learn the importance of the key issues. The course is basic.

MPH-532 course on "Health Inequality within and between countries" is under development and no student has yet registered. It remained unclear why it was yet to be developed. It is important that students appreciate how essential understanding inequalities is to being a public health professional. Teaching about them should form a basis for the MPH courses. They are likely touched

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on several courses but it is not clear to what extent this actually takes place and if the message gets through.

MPH-522: course on 'Health Policy, Management and Leadership', contains subjects on improving care by comparison of indicators and this lacks the subject of case mix correction.

MPH-523: course on 'Health Economics in the context of health services and systems: Global Perspectives' requires debates with the students about the meaning in daily life of (differences in) different systems across the world. The tutor considers increasing the proportion of the participation in the 'classroom' online discussions in the final grade to have more understanding by discussion.

Feedback

Students make initiatives, e.g. how to change things, and they are supported in that. The school actively involves students and their feedback is used to revise the courses and their contents.

Student feedback is taken into account even regarding small things like when to arrange webinars or large things like the structure or order of the courses, so that they are less challenging. For example, the MPH is now started with the 511 and the more demanding statistical course is replaced in the second semester. The course on drafting a research plan was re-planned by dividing it into smaller parts and giving feedback after each assignment.

Workload

Workload is described for each course and none of the students made any complaints regarding it. Rather they found it to be a highlight of the programme that it can be done part-time, which makes the workload more manageable. There are a lot of assignments and there is a requirement to have at least one interactive assignment per week. This does not work well with all courses, where it might be more suited to plan other types of assignments. It appears that the group work is the most challenging one to arrange due to the different time zones of the students, although it also gives the opportunity to form networks and share ideas and get to know each other.

Graduate employability is very high, 99.9% are working at over 200 medical centres around the world. They are better off at the start of their studies, as practically all start their studies when they are already employed, and it is very rare to enrol immediately after a bachelor degree.

Strengths
- The staff is very enthusiastic and proud of the MPH program.
- Every student both full-time as part-time has a personal mentor who can support in case of e.g. lack of background knowledge. The mentors are assigned at the start of the studies and selected based on shared interests and background, for better support.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The courses are quite large with 10 ECTS each. In theory, they could be 5 ECTS each, with more focus on one element of each course. Especially the course 513 containing both health protection as health promotion, which might be split in two.
- Limit the number of learning outcomes per course because it is too much for some of the courses. The language per learning outcome could be simplified to be more direct and focus on higher level skills which are measurable, so omit wordings as "deep understanding".
- Consider offering the courses as separate courses for students being able to just follow one course, this might increase the number of students enrolling the separate courses. This is also an option for students of School and Health and Life Science.
- With the current number of students, the number of elective courses could be limited or only run if there is a minimum number of students enrolled (min. 5, preferably more). Interactivity is a requirement, but it does not work with 3 students (some courses currently). Most of the students choose the research track, but only focussing on this track would not be advisable because the other part of the students are quite mature in research already, or have a job as a clinician /are specialised MDs who prefer to have a more theoretical background on PH.
- Be selective in the development of new elective courses. It might be more wise to put the energy in the courses which are already in place and only work on the elective new courses in case the number of students are rising in future.
- The group work could be arranged so that the groups are divided based on the time zones. The students find it hard when they are in three different time zones to arrange slots to meet for the group work. For those who were on the same or close time zones, group work was not an issue.
- There could be more events and opportunities for the students from different phases of their studies to meet and interact. This was suggested in the student meeting. Students would benefit from meeting each other, particularly those who have just started could meet with those who have studied more, to learn from each other.
- Focusing more on inequalities in health in the requested courses during the first semester would be of paramount importance. This would give students more in-depth understanding about the root causes of our key public health problems, and provide them with stronger knowledge to e.g. plan for their health promotion assignments considering the inequalities in health, avoiding widening inequalities if health promotion programme benefits the health of the advantaged population groups with already better health.
- As the course MPH-532 "Health Inequality within and between countries" is only under preparation, the planned materials could be updated. Marmot and Bartley are suitable references, but also others could be used. They are already from almost two decades ago, and e.g. Johan Mackenbach's book or papers could be considered. Sir Michael Marmot is the most famous social epidemiologist in the world and has a strong message / focus on changing policies and promoting more equal societies. Maybe some Whitehall II studies could be used as an example, as well as studies from other contexts for a wider picture. The personnel used a concept of "wider determinants' which is a bit vague. Maybe the programme could consider causes of causes or social determinants. Overall, it is not clear how the course is planned as the weekly schedule has some potentially overlapping areas and the logic is not entirely clear. This could also explain why no student has yet registered.
- The programme could add the concept of case mix correction and the need for this in case of comparing hospitals or countries in the MPH-522 course.
- MPH-523 course on 'Health Economics in the context of health services and systems: Global Perspectives' requires debates. This should be increased to have more understanding by

discussion and increasing the grading of the participation in the 'classroom' online discussions might be considered.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

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

2.2 Practical training

2.3 Student assessment

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

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

Standards

● *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*

● *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*

● *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - o *among students*
  - o *between students and teaching staff*
  - o *between students and study guides/material of study*

● *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*

● *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*

● *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*

● *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the e-learning process.*

● *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*

● *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*

● *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*

● *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*

● *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- ● *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*

- ● *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- ● *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*

- ● *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*

- ● *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*

- ● *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*

- ● *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the e-learning process.*

- ● *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*

- ● *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*

- ● *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*

- ● *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

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

- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

Findings

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

The teaching methods presented in the course descriptions are based on "recorded lectures, interactive online tutorials (Webinars), and discussion forums, as well as online exercises and other activities".

The pedagogical model is defined as student-centred and students are encouraged to be active participants in the learning process, although this needs to be strengthened, as it is pointed out in the recommendations section. The university has a specific distance-learning guideline shared with the whole community.

Most of the teaching activity is on Moodle and through live sessions on WebEx, with synchronous and asynchronous communication. The webinars are recorded and made available on the platform. There are also interactive online tutorials, at least 9 hours per week. These are arranged to enable participation for as many as possible, from different time Zones. Some students do not use their cameras but they can participate e.g. via chat.

To guarantee students' engagement and interaction, there are planned different activities with interactive questions and automated feedback.

However, there is a need to balance assignments between multiple-choice questions with automated feedback and assignments based on authentic tasks that require a deeper understanding and capability of applying the obtained knowledge and skills.

The teaching methods, tools, and materials used are oriented to provide support to the students in their learning process, and respect and attend to the diversity of students and their needs.

Students also have an academic mentor that provides academic support and guidance to decide on their study plan, and to support them with personal or academic challenges. The mentor acts as a referral point for academic and/ or personal issues and contributes to the MPH programme.

2.2 Practical Training

The students are offered guidance to develop analytical skills in the statistical software Stata, which they can later use in their research project, if relevant. There are also opportunities to conduct oral presentations and receive feedback on them, which supports the development of practical/soft skills. They obtained experience in giving feedback to fellow-students in group assignments. Moreover, students have access to the library and achieve skills in obtaining the acquired information.

2.3 Student Assessment

Students' evaluation in a course is mainly distributed into 30% of coursework (oral presentation/ assignments), 10% participation in webinars, and 60% final examination, according to relevant standards set by the state and the institution. Students can retake the assessment once, but two failed attempts lead to termination of registration.

Students receive individual and detailed feedback on the coursework. They cannot resubmit the essays or assignments, but the feedback includes suggestions on how to improve in future assignments.

Students need to do the assignments and the exam to pass the course, and there are clear actions to prevent plagiarism.

Most exams are closed book exams delivered online. They are mainly short-answer questions or/and single-best answer questions, and there is no feedback provided at the end. Final exams are proctored online (through proctorial) for all courses.

The exams are done digitally in which the questions are shuffled. For students in different time zones it might be at an inconvenient time. Having two versions of the exams can be a solution for this. This is now not so possible due to lack of exam questions, now they are shuffled, but having more versions is an option in future.

2.4. Study Guides

The committee had access to all the study guides of the courses. They include clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner. Course materials are also presented, and the activities and bibliographic references and suggestions for further study.

However, the EEC could only see a small sample of the PowerPoint presentations or sessions recorded.

The methodology and the assessment descriptions are mainly the same for most of the courses.

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The courses refer to infectious and chronic diseases, but not all of them are chronic. Current recommendation is to refer to non-communicable diseases in place of chronic diseases.

Please see further comments under the section #1, e.g. regarding the large number of learning objectives.

Strengths

- There is a defined pedagogical model and specific distance learning guidelines, with a strong emphasis on learning through interaction.
- Student learning is monitored during the whole course through assignments, synchronous and asynchronous sessions, automatic feedback and personalised feedback.
- The students' group size allows the programme teams to provide good support for learners, both at an individual and cohort level.
- A variety of teaching strategies are used to support asynchronous and synchronous student interaction through videoconferences, online tutorials, and online exercises, in order to promote discussions and share feedback.
- The programme coordinator has an overview of all courses and is responsible to ensure that a variety of appropriate types of assessment are used across the programme. The programme administrator is also aware of assessment deadlines and ensures that there is no substantial overlap in deadlines across courses which may negatively affect students' performance.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Although there are a variety of types of assignments, an approach based on authentic assessment, does not seem embedded in all study guides. Better coordination between the courses regarding assessment and an overall review of all assessment in light of new developments around Artificial Intelligent tools (Chat GPT) could strengthen this area going forward.
- In the study guides there is a distinction between formative and summative assessment, with formative assessments bearing no weight in the final grade. However, all activities/assignments - including the final exam- could have a formative component which would allow students to improve their performance in future assessments. This could also be a strength of the program due to the small number of students that you can follow and engage with the feedback.
- Due to the -relatively high- weighting of the final exam, the EEC suggests providing feedback at the end of it in order to enable student growth.
- There may be scope to improve the recorded sessions. They do offer some interaction, but some are relatively lengthy at ~40 minutes. Splitting them into smaller sections might help students to remain more concentrated. Also, there are quite easy technological solutions to include a picture-in-picture window with the lecturer, which might increase engagement compared to a voice-over video.
- The EEC recommends referring to non-communicable diseases in place of chronic diseases in the future versions of the Study Guide and course materials and teaching.

- Make A and B versions of the exams depending on the time zones

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

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

Sub-areas

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

3.1 **Teaching staff recruitment and development**

Standards

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

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

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

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

- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*

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

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

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

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

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

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

The University has a clear process of recruiting staff based on needs identified by the department. This is a relatively young University (founded 2007, MPH since 2018); however, a number of staff involved in the MPH programme have been working in the University for quite a few years, which offers stability and continuity.

The existing staff have relevant and adequate qualifications and experience which cover all the major topics within the programme. Teaching staff have studied and worked in diverse settings and, hence, they bring a wealth of experience. However, there are not many members of staff with experience working in Low- and Middle-Income countries, which could add value to the programme (alongside enabling student participation from these countries). To achieve global public health goals necessitates understanding of global public health questions. Life expectancy and disease burden still vary a lot between high and low income countries.

All full-time Faculty employees are required to complete a seminar on teaching and learning (36 hours over 12 weeks), which is roughly equivalent to a PG Certificate. This training is coordinated by the Faculty Training and Development Unit (FTDU) and includes general education and pedagogy, but also focuses on Distance Learning and online delivery. Almost 75% of full-time staff and 20% of part-time staff in the Faculty have completed this course, which should offer a good grounding in educational theory and practice. Four members of staff hold a PG Certificate in medical education. In addition, the e-learning Pedagogical Support Unit and the Distance Learning Unit of the UNIC offer technical support when needed and the teaching staff are well supported. The staff did not have any wishes for additional support, further confirming that the current diverse sources of support is adequate and can be accessed and is available when needed. For example, the DL Learning Management System (LMS) team of the Distance Learning Unit provides support services to faculty for use of Moodle and Teleconferencing Scheduling System.

The University's expectation is that staff spend 20% of their time on teaching-related activities. Teaching contributions and quality are considered essential elements of annual performance reviews and discussions on promotion. Doing research is also required for all teachers, and the amount is to be increased from 30% in 2022 to 40% (2 days a week) in 2023. There are also financial incentives to publish in Scopus indexed journals and publications further are considered for promotion. The estimate is that the staff has enough time to do research as expected and have sufficient time for high quality teaching alongside the requirements. As teaching should be based on up to date research the teaching-research ratio is of importance.

All teaching staff expressed their satisfaction with the level of support (administrative, technical etc.) they receive.

A range of changes have taken place in courses and the programme overall as a result of student feedback, which is regularly collected and considered by the team.

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

There are a total of 18 teaching staff members who contribute to the MPH programme. Thirteen of them are full-time and 5 are part-time. Ten courses are led by 8 members of staff. This seems to be adequate for the current number of students. No one complained about the workload, but appeared to be genuinely enthusiastic. The teachers are located everywhere, so they have all their meetings online.

There is a relatively large number of visiting and part-time staff involved in teaching. However, visiting staff seem to have a quite stable affiliation with the UNIC, which doesn't raise concerns around continuity. Having visiting members of staff who work in various areas of Public Health is actually an advantage of the course, as they bring real-life experience. The ratio between permanent staff and visitors was, however, in line with the requirement (visitors not exceeding 50%)

There are few full professors involved in teaching, which likely reflects the fact that the Department is expanding and recruiting academics at lower ranks/ younger academic age. The existing staff have sufficient qualifications though, so this is not highlighted as an issue. It appears that the University's policy is to focus more on research as academic members of staff progress towards the rank of the professor, which should be considered if the number of students increases and the existing members of staff mature and get promoted.

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Teaching staff are research active, with quite wide variation in research productivity. The UNIC has a strategy to encourage research among staff, and the number of publications produced by the Medical School has been increasing in recent years.

Some of the research work done by the teaching staff is reflected in the content of the respective courses, although some of the references could be updated to include more recent developments in the field. In several courses, the literature cited dated back 10 or 20 years. Furthermore, it was a bit narrow, e.g. using one or few same studies as a reference or the same book. The ebook is a good tool but the materials should be updated each year with new research.

Strengths

- The teaching staff are well supported and receive good training on education and e-learning by the appropriate teams within the UNIC. A number of them hold formal qualifications in teaching.
- The MPH is embedded in a larger university and this limits the costs for supportive staff and increases the flexibility of them.
- There is an expectation that all faculty are involved in teaching and spend a substantial part of their time doing so. Teaching is also considered in promotions, thus encouraging staff to remain engaged.
- There is a wide range of qualifications, expertise and experience available between members of staff.
- Feedback is collected and taken into consideration when planning future iterations of the programme.
- The current mix of teaching staff (full-time vs part-time, ranks, gender balance) seems to be largely appropriate for the current size of the programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- There are few members of staff with background and/or experience from low- and middle-income settings. Recruiting staff with relevant experience could enhance the programme, especially considering that there are very few students from LMICs, so this perspective is largely missing from the programme.
- More up-to-date research conducted by members of staff could be incorporated into some of the courses.
- As the body of full-time staff matures, and in accordance with the UNIC's strategy to increase research productivity, it is expected that members of staff will spend more time doing research. If the number of students also increases, this might create challenges for the programme. This is not the case yet, but it should be taken into account for mid-term planning.
- If and hopefully when the programme gets bigger with more students, it is vitally important to consider the workload of the teachers and ensure that they continue to have enough time for both teaching, research and other academic duties.

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

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

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

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

● *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*

● *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

● *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*

● *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

● *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*

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

● *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
   o *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*

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> ○ *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*
>
> ## 4.4 Student certification
>
> *Standards*
>
> ● *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
> ● *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

Findings

4.1. Student admission, processes and criteria

Approximately 20 students apply per year, with an intake of ~15 students per year.

Admissions are based on written applications following a list of requirements. In particular, their personal statement is of importance as part of the selection criteria. There are no interviews with the applicants.

Many applicants are from health-related backgrounds, such as nursing. They can also have a background in education or any other area, provided that their personal statement gives justification of their reasons to apply and continue in their career path in this area. Prior knowledge on health and disease is also considered.

Credits obtained elsewhere can be taken within the courses, but have to be applied for at Cyprus NARIC.

4.2. Student progression

After acceptance, students enrol and receive an orientation to the University and the course. Student progression overviews are done in several ways during the programme. Progress is monitored during the sessions/webinars in which they can pose questions on the specific subject given but also on the complete course. There is at least one interactive session per week. And 9 hours of tutorials/webinars which can be interactive also. It is not obligatory to have the camera on during webinars, but engagement could include chat comments. Attendance of the lectures are taken into consideration in the grading of the student (often 10% of the final grade).

Furthermore, the progress is followed by formative and summative assessments within the system. The quizzes are built within the pre-recorded lessons but also as separate elements. Having watched the pre-recorded videos and successfully completing the quizzes are prerequisites to continue to the subsequent sections. The number of attempts are recorded and can be seen by the tutors. This builds up the grade every week.

Feedback is also given by the tutors on e.g. essays which are written, PICO and PECO's. This is partly formative. Students can adapt their work and then send it in to be graded. This cannot be done for essays. On essays, feedback is given in a way which will improve the future essay assignments.

The research assignment (semester 3, elective track) can be supervised by an external supervisor, but is always monitored for progression by one co-supervisor within the MPH team.

4.3 Student recognition

Students' experience and knowledge is recognised. The web system has been structured in the way that students can skip e.g. lecture parts and can only do the obligatory quizzes and tests to see their level of understanding, so they do not waste time on basic parts of a course with which they are already familiar with. Previous experience, expertise and current work can also be utilised in the final research project. The students who participated in the meeting were very positive on the recognition of their previous achievements and current work/situation.

4.4 Student certification

After finalising all courses and achievement of the 90 ECTS the student receives the certification and diploma, which is in line with the European standards.

Strengths
- The student is able to find the balance between own time and the interaction sessions offered to be able to have debates and sessions together with the tutors, mentor and other students.
- The number of attempts in quizzes (formative testing) in the system are recorded and can be seen by the tutors, which can both give information on the progression of an individual student but also support improvement of the pre-recorded material and courses.
- Progress is monitored very closely and grading is spread over the course. The students can get a good feeling on where they are standing with the formative testing and be prepared for the exam well.
- Students can have a certificate per course, i.e., they do not need to complete the entire programme if they only want to increase their knowledge in a specific area such as public health nutrition.
- The recognition of students' background and prior experience is high.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The programme information that is publicly available could include a description of the basic required knowledge about illness and health and use this as a criterion for admission. This could also be useful to applicants preparing a personal statement.
- Students could be involved in formative assessment of their fellow-students (peer-review). This might not necessarily count for final grades, but would utilise students' experience and input and may reduce workload for teaching staff.

- There could be more support on how to build a network during the programme and after completing it. Moreover, there could be more interaction opportunities between students who started in different years, to learn from each other.

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

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

Sub-areas

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

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*

- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*

- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*

- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

- *All resources are fit for purpose.*

- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

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

5.4 Student support

Standards

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

Findings

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

All courses follow a similar approach regarding the structure on Moodle, available resources, and assessment. Students are provided with recorded sessions (15-40 minutes), a range of reading and online resources and weekly live sessions. Weekly interactive activities are set in each course to meet the relevant standard.

The resources available are largely appropriate and useful for students and support independent learning. Depending on the course, resources and activities have an applied, real-life element and case studies are used where possible.

The eLearning unit of the University provides support for the development of the material and there is consistency in structure and approach, which makes it easier for students to navigate the different courses.

Course leads are being asked to review their content annually and there is some flexibility built into the system to update material, which might be more difficult to apply to the recorded sessions.

5.2 Physical resources

This is a Distance Learning programme, therefore students do not normally have access to the physical space of the UNIC. Online access to software and library resources appear adequate for the current format of the programme and the number of students. Access to statistical software (Stata) is limited to the duration of the course, which can be a limiting factor to some of the students' research ambitions.

The few students based on Cyprus can participate in activities such as Mobile Clinic expeditions.

5.3 Human support resources

The support system in place seems to be adequate and working very well for the current number of students. The students commended the administrative team for their responsiveness and were generally happy with access to support when required.

5.4 Student support

Students are allocated a mentor and an academic advisor who support them throughout the programme. Currently, due to the relatively limited number of students in the programme, all advisors have a good knowledge of the MPH programme and can provide good support.

The students are informed about these and other services available to them during orientation week, and the ones the EEC spoke to were happy with the provision. The administrative team seemed engaged with the programme and aware of the challenges that the students may face. The flexibility between full-time and part-time offers opportunities to find solutions that work for students and the University, and this has been

acknowledged by both sides. This has contributed to a low drop-out rate despite the online delivery of the programme.

A range of learning resources are available to students. Synchronous sessions are scheduled to maximise participation of students and are recorded and made available to students. Some of the learning resources might not be entirely up to date with, occasionally, the limiting factor being that all resources should be available online at the UNIC library.

Students feel empowered to contact staff directly and ask questions; the staff are responsive and students find them helpful.
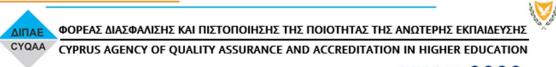
Strengths

- All live sessions are scheduled based on students' time zones to increase attendance and are also recorded, which is appropriate to accommodate the students' complex work and life circumstances.
- Required books are available as e-books in the library, so there is no additional cost to the students.
- Mentors and academic advisors are closely linked to the programme and, therefore, can provide useful guidance regarding courses, but also career development, University resources etc.
- There are sufficient material and human resources supporting members of staff and students. The administrative and eLearning support were highlighted as particularly positive.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- There is limited teamwork between students due to the nature of the course, the mix of full-time and part-time students and the different time zones where students live. The students asked for a way to establish communication between different cohorts of students and improvements in group work allocation. For example, time zones could be considered when creating groups. There is a forum on Moodle, but the students do not seem to find it particularly helpful. The programme team could consider alternative solutions, such as Slack channels for students' interactions, if appropriate.
- The programme team should consider what is the most appropriate statistical software to be used for teaching going forward. The current choice of Stata is reasonable, but continued access to it comes with a cost for graduates, whereas R is free, but potentially with a steeper learning curve for students. The UNIC could also consider offering access to a Stata licence to recent graduates for a limited period after graduation, which would allow them to continue working on their research project and pursue publication.

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	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

D. *Other issues of relevance*

The EEC would like to highlight some additional areas of relevance that came up during the onsite visit and discussions.

1. Mental health

We noticed that mental health issues are only touched upon in some of the courses based on the presentations, such as regarding migrant health, but there is no single course or clear module focusing on these very important public health issues. For example, while the mortality to other non-communicable diseases in the EU area has notably decreased during previous decades, there has been an increase in mental disorders among adolescents and young adults, which started even before the pandemic (Armocida et al., 2022; Castelpietra et al., 2022). It is vital to add focus on mental health due to the enormous public health challenge it poses.

2. Scholarships

The EEC has some concerns regarding the tuition fees for the following reasons. First, the MPH has a global health focus in many courses, and it is important that there are students from around the world. However, due to the high fees, the MPH is not affordable to many people from poorer parts of the world. The current discount of 20% and the maximum 10% discount based on financial issues is not helpful for many people with very low income levels. It would be important to have perspectives from around the world in terms of a diverse student population, but also promote more equal opportunities to participate in terms of full scholarships. We suggest that the discount of 20% could be removed or reduced, and rather the school could offer a few full scholarships to enable participation more equally. They could also market this opportunity more actively, which could give the school more visibility and applicants. The EEC questioned whether 20% discount for all is making a difference as many mature students e.g. having a job as a surgeon or up to a professor level would anyway take the programme, even without the discount. The saved funds could rather be used for those in actual need for such support, enabling talented people from low income countries to participate. This would make live webinars and group work and the entire etc. richer as well, and provide the students more ankles to their assignments.

Armocida, B. et al. (2022) 'Burden of non-communicable diseases among adolescents aged 10-24 years in the EU, 1990-2019: a systematic analysis of the Global Burden of Diseases Study 2019.', The Lancet. Child & Adolescent Health, 6(6), pp. 367–383. Doi: 10.1016/S2352-4642(22)00073-6.

Castelpietra, G. et al. (2022) 'The burden of mental disorders, substance use disorders and self-harm among young people in Europe, 1990–2019: Findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019', The Lancet Regional Health - Europe, 16, p. 100341. Doi: 10.1016/J.LANEPE.2022.100341.

E. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC members think this is a high quality and well-planned programme. The staff are enthusiastic and qualified to deliver the course. The programme is well-supported by support staff (e.g. IT and administrative staff), and the students also appear satisfied with the flexibility offered, particularly with the opportunity to study part-time.

The content is largely appropriate and there is a clear strategy to build and deliver e-Learning resources which promote engagement and independent learning.

Varied and adequate high quality support is a key strength, as both students and staff are provided with plenty of support and help where needed. Students further have their own mentor of similar interests to help them succeed.

However, the ECC members also have a few recommendations which the programme team could consider to further improve the programme:

Sustainable Development Goals were not explicitly highlighted, but are likely considered as the programme emphasises One Health. However, the EEC thinks e.g. the study materials could be updated also in this respect, to explicitly consider SDGs. Also overall, a strong recommendation of the ECC is to systematically update the course materials to include up to date scientific studies, in line with the standards.

Terminology could also be revised, e.g. using non-communicable diseases in place of chronic diseases and social determinants in place of wider determinants of health, as we are talking about the causes of causes, not any additional or vague factors.

Also mental health should be highlighted more as it is of a major public health concern.

The structure of the programme is reasonable, but the reliance on 10 ECTS courses can be challenging to some extent. For example, some courses could be split into smaller (5 ECTS) courses, which would have more internal consistency. Such an approach would also allow the development of more courses to cover areas that are currently missing. Related to this, the development of more 10 ECTS-elective courses while the number of students is relatively low may need to be reconsidered.

A major shortcoming was the lack of modules on health inequalities, as these are in the core of public health and the future public health professionals are required to have an in-depth understanding on the root causes of key public health problems.

Related to the above, to enable more in-depth discussion and comprehensive understanding on public health globally, it would be very important to have teachers with experience from more diverse settings and particularly enable scholarships for students from low income countries in place of partial scholarships for all. This would not result in less tuition income but would be promoting more equal access.

F. Signatures of the EEC

Name	*Signature*
Tea Lallukka	
Filippos Filippidis	
Sabine Siesling	
Teresa Guasch	*Tresa Guasch*
Stefanos Hilides	

Date: 21/02/2023