



Έντυπο 300.1.2/2

Απάντηση του Ιδρύματος στην Αναβολή Λήψης Απόφασης (ESG 2.3)

Αρ. Φακ.:	07.14.290.041	Αξιολόγηση/Πιστοποίηση
		Πρόγραμμα
Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών: Τίτλος Σπουδών (Διάρκεια, ECTS, Κύκλος Σπουδών)	Computer Engineering (3 academic years, 240 ECTS, Doctorate (PhD)) Μηχανικός Υπολογιστών(3ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS, Διδακτορικό(PhD))	
Ίδρυμα:	Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου	

Το Συμβούλιο του Φορέα Διασφάλισης και Πιστοποίησης της Ποιότητας της Ανώτερης Εκπαίδευσης, κατά την 85η Σύνοδό του, η οποία πραγματοποιήθηκε στις 19/09/2022,, αφού μελέτησε την αίτηση του Ιδρύματος, την έκθεση της Επιτροπής Εξωτερικής Αξιολόγησης (ΕΕΑ) και την Απάντηση του ιδρύματος στις παρατηρήσεις της ΕΕΑ αποφάσισε την αναβολή λήψης απόφασης ούτως ώστε να προωθηθεί από το ίδρυμα ενημέρωση για ικανοποίηση των συστάσεων της ΕΕΑ.

Η απάντηση της ΕΕΑ στάλθηκε στην αρμόδιο λειτουργό **15/10/2022**.



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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)		
1.	The programme should be reviewed regularly, taking into account feedback from academic staff, students, external local industry experts and professional bodies.	<p>The program is reviewed by the Quality Assurance Committee in collaboration with the Graduate Studies Committee of the Department on an annual basis and according to the standards and guidelines of the University's QA manual, which are in line with ESG 2015. In brief, the Graduate Studies Committee of the Department collects and analyzes qualitative and quantitative data, in order to identify strengths and weaknesses. The findings are discussed in an annual meeting with the QA Committee in order to come up with suggestions for improvements and to set up an action plan for implementing them. The proposal is then sent for approval by the Departmental Council.</p> <p>Additionally, the Graduate Studies Committee of the Department oversees the operation of the program constantly, dealing with problem solving, student support, academic content, etc. In order to have valuable information and feedback from industry stakeholders, students, etc., the Department will arrange stakeholder meetings once per year. These periodic reviews will be done as a part of the preparation for the accreditation of the Department's programs of study (i.e., every five years). All pertinent stakeholders (staff, students, industry, professional bodies) will all be asked for their extensive feedback prior to the periodic reviews in order to incorporate their feedback to the revised programs of study.</p>
2.	The Department should continue to expand promotional activities for its programmes.	We believe that the PhD program is a niche market, so using mass promotion activities is not the appropriate way to attract students. Consequently, the Department's target is to enhance awareness of its strong research profile in order to attract high caliber PhD students. This will be achieved through its own webpage, which has recently been updated, better visibility of research outcomes, strengthening connections with industry, as well through hosting of conferences and other research-oriented activities. Furthermore, academic collaborations with universities abroad constitute another promotional channel for the PhD program. Finally, the program will be promoted throughout the



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		<p>Faculty of Engineering, which has recently developed a marketing plan for all its Departments' programs.</p> <p>In general, even though the Department is already very active in outreach and promotional activities, we intend to further increase our efforts in this domain. With the switch to English-taught post-graduate programmes in the Fall 2023 semester, we also intend to embark on systematic advertising through all relevant online and physical channels that reach an international audience.</p>
2. Student - centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)		
1.	<p>Continue the current practise of encouraging doctoral students to spend time abroad, funded by various EU programmes, and intensify efforts to make joint degrees with foreign institutions possible.</p>	<p>The Department already sends PhD students on external research stays through externally funded schemes. In addition to utilizing the various EU schemes to send students abroad, all academics are encouraged to send their PhD students for short stays at their research collaborators' institutions in other countries. There are indeed many cases of such external stays by our Ph.D. students, especially when they are conducting research on collaborative EU/international research programs. The Department will continue encouraging external stays funded through various EU schemes (e.g., through the Erasmus programme, collaborative agreements, COST Actions, and Marie Curie ITN projects, etc.). Additionally, our continuous efforts in strengthening and extending existing collaborations with Universities and research centres abroad are also helping this effort to have PhD students spend time abroad.</p> <p>It is noted here that efforts are underway at the University level with institutions abroad on the possibility of offering joint PhD degrees. This is a significant effort that is undertaken by the University, as these agreements cannot be made at the Departmental level. Nevertheless, the Department is currently assisting/supporting with such an effort for the possibility of a joint degree with a university in the UK.</p>

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2.	Staff should ensure that all PhD students either spend some time in an appropriate exchange programme or benefit from other schemes to gain further research ideas and opportunities.	<p>Ph.D. students participate on external research stays through various EU schemes. For instance, our Ph.D. students have visited quite prestigious universities in the past through the Erasmus programme, collaborative agreements, COST Actions, and Marie Curie ITN projects. Indicative examples include Imperial College London (UK), NICT (Japan), the University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany) , UCL (UK), and DTU (Denmark).</p> <p>In addition to utilizing the various EU schemes to send students abroad, all academics are encouraged to send their Ph.D. students for short stays at their research collaborators' institutions in other countries. There are indeed many cases of such external stays by our Ph.D. students, especially when they are conducting research on collaborative EU/international research programs. In fact, our department is ranked number 1 within the University in attracting international research grants. Over the last 20 years, we have received more than 80 million Euros in research funding. Moreover, we have attracted 4 ERC grants and 2 ERC Proof-of-Concept grants. All these research grants inherently involve, extensive international collaborations, which further enable our PhD students to spend time abroad as part of these collaborations.</p>
3.	In seminars, a higher level of student engagement should be sought and expected than just attendance.	We believe that the EEC has, unfortunately, misunderstood the concept of the seminars provided in the program. The philosophy of the Graduate Seminars is to expose the students to various areas of research across the entire spectrum of Electrical and Computer Engineering domains. Unlike other courses, the goal of this seminar course is not for the students to learn specific technical details, but to be informed of various areas/domains of research activity. Given this overarching goal and the fact that each seminar is given by a different invited speaker (often from abroad) and covers totally different research activities, the Department believes that the students' attendance is a sufficient requirement to ensure fulfillment of the Seminar's purpose.



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		<p>For this reason, students do not take any exams and there is no numerical grade; instead, it is a pass/fail course.</p> <p>Finally, it should be noted that the practice of requiring only attendance to fulfil the Seminar requirement is also followed in other leading institutions around the world.</p>
4.	<p>Efforts to ensure transparency and fairness across exams should be further strengthened, especially with regard to comprehensive exams. With regard to the examination process, it is expected that general areas will be prescribed so that different students face questions of equal difficulty or demonstrate the same level of knowledge in order to receive a pass.</p>	<p>The Department has already acted and appointed a two-pronged safeguard in place to precisely address this concern. More specifically, before any Comprehensive Examination takes place, the detailed contents of the exam (including the relevant bibliography) are submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee of the Department for approval. The Committee has a mandate to investigate and ensure that the contents of each exam are appropriate and consistent with the area of specialization of the student. Moreover, since the Committee approves ALL Comprehensive Examinations for ALL students, it has the complete picture to ensure consistency and fairness across the board.</p> <p>Further, these exams are given by three different faculty members for each subject (who participate in a number of different exams for different students, reassuring in that manner the same difficulty level.</p> <p>Additionally, the role of the independent observer is further fulfilled by the 25-member Departmental Council that views the contents of all Comprehensive Examinations and decides whether they are appropriate and fair. Consequently, the content recommendation for each Comprehensive Examination is ultimately approved (or rejected) by the entire Departmental Council.</p>
5.	<p>HEI might consider raising the bar in line with international standards and moving to the practise of having a</p>	<p>The composition of the evaluation committees is strictly dictated by the general rules/regulations that apply to all Departments of the University. Since the modification of the rule related to this issue is beyond the control of the Department, the suggestion has been forwarded to the University's QA</p>

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	majority of external members on the PhD assessment committee.	<p>Committee in order to examine it and take any further action. Currently, PhD defense committee consist of 3 faculty members from the Department and two external faculty members (one of whom can be from another Department at the University of Cyprus). Of course, this committee can also consist of additional external members, subject to approval by the Departmental Council. This is in line with our experiences/best practices from other universities abroad (i.e., this is the most common practice in all leading universities in the USA).</p> <p>It should also be noted here that there are very strict explicit criteria for obtaining the PhD degree, with the most important being the originality of the research work and its acceptance within the scientific community through the publication of the work in high-quality international conference proceedings and high-impact journal publications prior to defending the work (this is also in line with what is done in the vast majority of universities around the world).</p>
Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)		
1.	Efforts to increase the academic staff to 25 or more should continue, as this will create a broader and richer research environment for PhD students and increase the likelihood that students will be able to find other faculty members to informally discuss and advise on their projects.	The Department requests new positions every year, but the ultimate decision is made at the University-level, as a number of Schools/Departments compete for the faculty positions allocated annually to the University by the government. Nevertheless, the planned increase of academic staff to 25 is well under way, since we have very recently hired 2 new academics and are in the process of hiring 1 more, which will take the total number of staff to 22.
4. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)		



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1.	Overheads on grants should be pooled at Faculty level to provide additional administrative support for PhD students and their research projects.	As per the University's rules, a percentage amount of the overheads of each individual research grant is returned to the Department, where it is pooled in the Department's finances, in order to be used to support its operation. Hence, the department can use this money to support PhD students. In fact, the Department will allocate an amount of money (from this pool) in the next year's budget, in order to be able to better support the administration of PhD students.

Conclusions and Final Remarks

The present document adheres to the European Standards and Guidelines, in particular Standards 2.3 (Implementing Processes) and its guidelines, which provide that *"Agencies have a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution"*.