ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
THE CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: …………………………

External evaluation report

- **Higher education institution:**

  …Neapolis University…………………………………

- **Town:** …Pafos…………………………………

- **Programme of study (Name, ECTS, duration, cycle)**

  In Greek: …………………………………………………..

  ……………………………………………………………………

  In English: …European Politics and Governance (Conventional)……………………………………

- **Language of instruction:** …English/Greek…….

- **Programme's status**
  New programme: …X……
  Currently operating: ……………

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

A. Introduction

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC), comprised of a Chair, three academic members (including one primarily focusing on distance education), and a student member visited Neapolis University in the presence of Mr George Aletraris from the DIPAE. The Committee met relevant members of the University and of the proposed Programme of study as well as students from other degrees and visited the current premises of the University. We listened to colleagues' presentations and asked questions in open discussions with the Academic team.

The Committee was very satisfied with the welcome offered by the University as well as the excellent logistical and organizational support provided by the DIPAE.

The Committee also believes that the University and notably the prospective programme director have put genuine effort in trying to design a solid programme of study and that the degree should receive accreditation. There are nonetheless a number of points that should be addressed to ensure that programme quality meets international standards and transparent and fulfilling student experiences.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Michael Bruter	Professor, Chair	London School of Economics
Sylvia Kritzinger	Professor, Member	University of Vienna
Elias Dinas	Associate Professor, Member	Oxford University
John Butcher	Professor, assessing Distance Education	Open University
Tasos Lamprou	Student Member	University of Cyprus

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1. **Study programme and study programme's design and development**
   (*ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9*)

Findings

The newly designed Master programme will enrich the diversity of Master programmes in the social sciences in Cyprus and the wider region. It offers courses on the history of the EU, its institutions, theoretical approaches and on a wide range of important EU-policies. A research focus is also included by offering a course on research methodology (see below though).

Strengths

It is an innovative programme for the region and will prepare young people for the job market in national and European political institutions and the private sector. There will be close interactions between the tutors and the students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Greater transparency of procedures is crucial for students. The research focus of the Master programme could be strengthened.

Mark from 1 to 10 the degree of compliance of each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 10
1.1	Academic oversight of the programme design is ensured	8
1.2	The guide and / or the regulations for quality assurance provide the adequate information and data for the support and management of the programme of study for all the years of study.	8
1.3	Internal Quality Assurance processes safeguard the quality and the fulfillment of the programme's purpose, objectives and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Particularly, the following are taken into consideration:	
1.3.1	The disclosure of the programme's curricula to the students and their implementation by the teaching staff	8
1.3.2	The programme webpage information and material	8

	1.3.3	The procedures for the fulfillment of undergraduate and postgraduate assignments / practical training	7
	1.3.4	The procedures for the conduct and the format of the examinations and for student assessment	7
	1.3.5	Students' participation procedures for the improvement of the programme and of the educational process	6
1.4		The purpose and objectives of the programme are consistent with the expected learning outcomes and with the mission and the strategy of the institution.	7
1.5		The following ensure the achievement of the programme's purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes:	
	1.5.1	The number of courses	8
	1.5.2	The programme's content	7
	1.5.3	The methods of assessment	7
	1.5.4	The teaching material	7
	1.5.5	The equipment	8
	1.5.6	The balance between theory and practice	8
	1.5.7	The research orientation of the programme	6
	1.5.8	The quality of students' assignments	6
1.6		The expected learning outcomes of the programme are known to the students and to the members of the teaching staff.	8
1.7		The teaching and learning process is adequate and effective for the achievement of the expected learning outcomes.	8
1.8		The content of the programme's courses reflects the latest achievements / developments in science, arts, research and technology.	7
1.9		New research results are embodied in the content of the programme of study.	6
1.10		The content of foundation courses is designed to prepare the students for the first year of their chosen undergraduate degree.	n.a.
1.11		Students' command of the language of instruction is appropriate.	n.a.
1.12		The programme of study is structured in a consistent manner and in sequence, so that concepts operating as preconditions precede the teaching of other, more complex and cognitively more demanding, concepts.	n.a

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1.13	The learning outcomes and the content of the courses are consistent.	8
1.14	The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied and there is correspondence between credits, workload and expected learning outcomes per course and per semester.	9
1.15	The higher education qualification awarded to the students corresponds to the purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes of the programme.	9
1.16	The higher education qualification and the programme of study conform to the provisions for registration to their corresponding professional and vocational bodies for the purpose of exercising a particular profession.	8
1.17	The programme's management in regard to its design, its approval, its monitoring and its review, is in place.	9
1.18	The programme's collaborations with other institutions provide added value and are compared positively with corresponding collaborations of other departments / programmes of study in Europe and internationally.	8
1.19	Procedures are applied so that the programme conforms to the scientific and professional activities of the graduates.	9
1.20	The admission requirements are appropriate.	9
1.21	Sufficient information relating to the programme of study is posted publicly.	6
1.22	The teaching methodology is suitable for teaching in higher education.	8

Comments:

The proposed new Master Programme "European Politics and Governance" covers a new teaching programme in Cyprus and beyond. We have the following suggestions to specify and improve the programme further and thus to add additional value to the programme.

1) We advise to rename the Programme from "European Politics and Governance" to "EU Politics and Governance". The former suggests a comparative political science course at the national level, while the latter clearly specifies that it focuses on the history, the institutions and various policies of the EU.

2) The courses are elaborated well but we suggest the following modifications:

- an additional focus on European Parliament elections and the development of public opinion towards the EU should be introduced (e.g. Euro-skepticisms, permissive consensus debate, etc.)

- we advise to allow for some flexibility in the choice of course. It would be advisable that students could choose up to two courses from other master programmes, which are content-wise close to the Master programme "EU politics and governance". This possibility should be clearly stated in the study book.

- we also suggest some flexibility in the ordering of courses to be taken. Apart from the course ""Research Design and Empirical Methods in the Social Sciences" the programme does not

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foresee any prerequisites for attending courses. Hence, students could indifferently take courses in the first or second semester of the programme. This would help students starting the programme in the second term and reduce the teaching load for the programme.

- we advise to provide more clarity on the teaching language (e.g. what are the prerequisites to attend the programme either in English or Greek and how are language issues covered in the course work and written assignments?). As the programme is very much oriented towards an international market, we suggest putting particular emphasis on the English-speaking Master programme.

3) Overall, we advise to provide clear instructions in the study book on how the programme is structured, how course work is assessed, which measures can be taken by students, etc. The programme needs to strive for highest transparency.

4) We advise to compose the advisory board in a more heterogeneous way. Currently it is to a large extent non-academic and oriented towards regional expertise. A more international set-up as well as a greater focus on gender balance would be advisable.

Please circle one of the following for:

Study programme and study programme's design and development

substantially compliant

2. **Teaching, learning and student assessment** (*ESG 1.3*)

   Findings

   Much of the proposed programme is coherent in terms of its teaching, learning, and assessment components. There are details of some specific courses, transparency and diversity of assessment that we recommend reviewing.

   Strengths

   Most courses are coherent if fairly traditional in approach. It is positive that all courses rely on two different modes of assessment. The University also makes good use of a relatively small team to tackle different angles of EU politics and governance.

   Areas of improvement and recommendations

   Part of the worries stemming from the original documents have been alleviated in the discussion, but some areas are still worth improving. We detail them below, but they include strengthening the methods training, ensuring that all reading lists are diverse, and ensuring diversity of assessment both within and across courses.

1 to 10 the degree of compliance of each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 10
2.1	The actual/expected number of students in each class allows for constructive teaching and communication.	10
2.2	The actual/expected number of students in each class compares positively to the current international standards and/or practices.	10
2.3	There is an adequate policy for regular and effective communication with students.	7
2.4	The methodology implemented in each course leads to the achievement of the course's purpose and objectives and those of the individual modules.	7
2.5	Constructive formative assessment for learning and feedback are regularly provided to the students.	8
2.6	The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate, and known to the students.	8
2.7	Educational activities which encourage students' active participation in the learning process are implemented.	9
2.8	Teaching incorporates the use of modern educational technologies that are consistent with international standards, including a platform for the electronic support of learning.	9
2.9	Teaching materials (books, manuals, journals, databases, and teaching notes) meet the requirements set by the methodology of the programme's individual courses and are updated regularly.	7
2.10	It is ensured that teaching and learning are continuously enriched by research.	6
2.11	The programme promotes students' research skills and inquiry learning.	7
2.12	Students are adequately trained in the research process.	6

Comments:

- There are issues regarding the research method training. At this stage, the module is not entirely convincing. We suggest that the course should be redesigned to include 1) research design elements (including dissertation writing support, ethics, research

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question, theoretical consideration, hypotheses, data, methods, access to databases through various data archives, etc.), 2) introductions to key qualitative methods (interviews, qualitative text analysis, etc.) which many students may choose to use in their dissertations, 3) a basic introduction to quantitative data analysis such as descriptive and multivariate statistical analyses including lab sessions (either using SPSS or R). We suggest that this would be best conceived as a team-taught course with three specialists of each of the three areas in charge. Eventually, we suggest to rename the course to "Research Design and Empirical Methods in the Social Sciences";

- The organisers should ensure diversity of assessment within and across courses. At this stage, the nature of midterm assessment is not sufficiently clear and transparent to students so it should be agreed by the time students apply for the Masters. Midterm assessment should never be a second written exam. It would be good to consider different alternative assessments (essays, literature critiques, article manuscript for the university's student journal, etc.) in different courses. The organisers should consider reducing the weight of final exams in the total grade as 70% seems higher than needed.

- Reading lists are very book focused and need to be diverse, including articles. "Textbook teaching" (e.g. current draft of the methods course) should be avoided at Masters level. We note that the organisers confirmed in the discussion that fuller and more diverse reading lists will be prepared. We suggest that reading lists should also be diverse in terms of nationality and gender of authors.

- The Committee had concerns with the original description of the dissertation but some have been alleviated in the discussion. Notably, in the discussion the organisers confirmed that there is only one type of dissertation (not separate biographical/implementation) and that students propose a topic using a submission form which is very positive. It is Important that students are able to write dissertations and any research papers in English regardless of the language of the programme.

- It is important to clarify students' expectations. Details of all assessment (including midterm) of available support and entitlements (notably role of dissertation supervisors, what they will or will not read, available methodological support, etc.) must be very clear in the student handbook and study guides.

- This is also true of distance learning where expectations about distance tasks (e.g. how detailed and how long students are expected to dedicate to each) should be clear every time.

Please circle one of the following for:

Teaching, learning and student assessment

substantially compliant

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3. Teaching Staff (*ESG 1.5*)

Findings

People seem to be enthusiastic and eager to start. We were told this is the first EU graduate course in the area (Greece and Cyprus), which if the case, would explain why there is a shared belief among the personnel that this MA will fill an important gap.

Strengths

Basic processes well set in place; good match between personnel's expertise and the teaching modules.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Absence of women in the teaching personnel.

Better link to other departments and faculties working on the same field.

Mark from 1 to 10 the degree of compliance of each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 10
3.1	The number of full-time teaching staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, and their fields of expertise, adequately support the programme of study.	10
3.2	The members of teaching staff for each course have the relevant formal and fundamental qualifications for teaching the course, including the following:	
	3.2.1 Subject specialisation	9
	3.2.2 Research and Publications within the discipline	6
	3.2.3 Experience / training in teaching in higher education	7
3.3	The programme attracts visiting professors of recognized academic standing.	5
3.4	The specialisations of visiting professors adequately support the programme of study.	10

3.5	Special teaching staff and special scientists have the necessary qualifications, adequate work experience and specialisation to teach a limited number of courses in the programme of study.	8
3.6	In the programme of study, the ratio of the number of courses taught by full-time staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, to the number of courses taught by part-time staff, ensures the quality of the programme of study.	10
3.7	The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff supports and safeguards the programme's quality.	10
3.8	The teaching load allows for the conduct of research and contribution to society.	8
3.9	The programme's coordinator has the qualifications and experience to coordinate the programme of study.	9
3.10	The results of the teaching staff's research activity are published in international journals with the peer-reviewing system, in international conferences, conference minutes, publications etc.	6
3.11	The teaching staff is provided with adequate training opportunities in teaching methods, adult education and new technologies.	7
3.12	Feedback processes for teaching staff in regard to the evaluation of their teaching work, by the students, are satisfactory.	9

Comments:

The academic staff consists of eight faculty members, seven of whom are permanent staff: five professors, one assistant professor and one lecturer. The non-permanent member of staff, a special scientist, will be working on a part-time basis. All eight members of staff hold a PhD on a relevant area of study. The allocation of courses to the teaching staff tends to follow closely their expertise. The only exception is the course on research methodology, on which we have made several suggestions, as discussed in more detail above. We also recommend the provision of teaching assistants for the lab component of the course.

Perhaps the most significant drawback from the teaching staff is its demographic composition. The absence of women is staggering and could have implications on students' academic as well as pastoral experience and provisions. In terms of transparency, the only new member of staff that seems to have been included in the team with the purpose of providing teaching for the specific program is the Visiting Fellow, Ioannis Galariotis, whose CV seems apt for this post.

Processes seem to be in place for the professional development of the teaching staff. There is provision for research leaves, with sabbaticals scheduled for one term (six months) every three years, allowing teaching staff to accumulate terms if they want to. The university seems to encourage its faculty to take up visiting positions elsewhere, as the example of Professor Maris's stay in SEESOX at Oxford reveals. By the same token, members of staff are encouraged to provide teaching elsewhere in so far as doing so contributes to their

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professional development. Again, Professor Maris' case attests to this practice. As a way of acquiring teaching experience, Professor Maris taught a course in the University of Cyprus during the previous academic year.

Teaching quality checks are also in place. According to the staff that was present in our meeting, students' teaching evaluations constitute an important component of the staff's overall evaluation. In general, teaching seems to be well-integrated in the overall assessment of the personnel. Yet, there is still room for improvement when it comes to the procedures put in place to aid teaching staff to improve their teaching. It would be great if some effort is made to help the staff develop teaching skills whenever student evaluations appear to be low. Importantly, this is the case for the conventional program. The distance-learning programme seems more focused on developing teaching skills and could serve as a model for the rest of the course.

What seems to be missing is a more systematic attempt to attract recognized visiting staff in the study program. Thus far, there is only one visiting fellow, who will be providing teaching on a part-time basis. It would be ideal to see more visiting fellows, who could offer lectures by discussing about their research on the topic. In general, although there seems to be a tendency to incorporate people outside the university, these are typically non-academics (e.g. politicians, members of military forces etc.). It might be useful to incorporate academics from other universities, who could enrich the faculty with their research and teaching.

Please circle one of the following for:

Teaching Staff

Substantially compliant

4. **Students** (*ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7*)

Findings

Student expectations need to be clear; contingency measures must be in place. We could not of course meet students of the actual programme during our visit as it has not started. Discussion with other students of the university, however, helped to clarify how they perceive welfare provision in the university.

Strengths

Student welfare is adequately provided.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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More
work

needs to be done as a way of strengthening student entitlement to pastoral provision and systematic and transparent communication.

Mark from 1 to 10 the degree of compliance of each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 10
4.1	The student admission requirements for the programme of study are based on specific regulations and suitable criteria that are favourably compared to international practices.	9
4.2	The award of the higher education qualification is accompanied by the diploma supplement which is in line with European and international standards.	10
4.3	The programme's evaluation mechanism, by the students, is effective.	8
4.4	Students' participation in exchange programmes is compared favourably to similar programmes across Europe.	7
4.5	There is a student welfare service that supports students in regard to academic, personal problems and difficulties.	9
4.6	Statutory mechanisms, for the support of students and the communication with the teaching staff, are effective.	8
4.7	Mentoring of each student is provided and the number of students per each permanent teaching member is adequate.	8
4.8	Flexible options / adaptable to the personal needs or to the needs of students with special needs, are provided.	8
4.9	Students are satisfied with their learning experiences.	8

Comments:

Welfare provisions seem to be in place via three main channels. First, students are assigned to personal tutors who are required to see them three times per term. It has been unclear how closely this rule is followed in practice and we would encourage the school to take steps in monitoring compliance with this regulation. Second, the psychology faculty holds a group of counsellors offering their service for free. The group, SKEPSIS, seems to be also organizing other events and activities that seem to be particularly useful for students. Third, there is the

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special needs and disability support service, a more specialized unit focusing on issues of welfare support.

In our visit we were informed that there is an induction week, in which students are informed about ways to obtain welfare provision. This information is also available in printed booklets as well as online in the university's webpage. There are also courses to facilitate access to moodle and to familiarize students with its use. There is also a dissertation tutor assigned to each student though it should be ensured that this is based on research expertise. Tutors are scheduled to meet supervisees regularly, although again, we stress the importance of communicating those expectations clearly and transparently to the students. What we would like to point out in this respect is that the presence of these processes should be accompanied by an attempt to strengthen the perception of entitlement to these facilities by the students. Doing so would greatly help to convert these structures into best practices.

Students are also entitled to exchange programmes and they seem to be aware of these opportunities. There is also a trip organized every year to Brussels which seems to be very nicely matched with the scope and learning outcomes of the program.

Please circle one of the following for:

Students

substantially compliant

5. **Resources** (*ESG 1.6*)

Findings

The University provides MSc European Politics and Governance students with an adequate range of resources, all of which are accessible. The physical resource is appropriate for a smallish initial cohort.

Strengths

The University has provided a strong IT infrastructure which supports the needs of learners and enables administrators to monitor the progress of students. The VLE system, delivered through the Moodle platform, is robust and well-designed to support an engaging and interactive student experience.

Useful induction materials (mainly online) inform the students about the teaching and support services available to them.

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Areas of improvement and recommendations

The University are aware of the constraints and challenges faced by a new Masters' Programme. It is critical that teaching staff be involved in the management of financial resources and about the University's strategic plans should the course under-recruit initially.

Mark from 1 to 10 the degree of compliance of each quality indicator/criterion

1 – 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 10
5.1	Adequate and modern learning resources are available to the students.	8
5.2	The library includes the latest books and material that support the programme.	7
5.3	The library loan system facilitates students' studies.	9
5.4	The laboratories adequately support the programme.	8
5.5	Student welfare services are of high quality.	8
5.6	Statutory administrative mechanisms for monitoring and supporting students are sufficient.	7
5.7	Suitable books and reputable journals support the programme of study.	8
5.8	An internal communication platform supports the programme of study.	9
5.9	The equipment used in teaching and learning (laboratory and electronic equipment, consumables etc.) are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate.	8
5.10	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are adequate and accessible to students.	8
5.11	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are updated regularly with the most recent publications.	7

Comments:

Access to the electronic resources (teaching material, students support, etc) is delivered through a robust moodle platform, which is well structured and well managed. Up to date book

and journal resources are accessible via an effective e-library system, which enables both conventional and distance students to learn in an equitable way.

It would be important for students that appropriate (and free) open-access European databases are made available to students to enable to engage in secondary analysis.

Please circle one of the following for:

Resources

substantially compliant

C. Conclusions and final remarks

Overall, we believe that the University and prospective programme director have put together a coherent proposal for the degree which should be accredited. The university and team are small but ambitious and aim to give students a positive experience of internationally credible standards.

We nevertheless believe that a number of important questions need to be addressed, notably:

- Transparency and expectations: Students are entitled to know what to expect and what their rights and obligations are in a clear, transparent, and specific way. This includes every aspect from choice of outside options to assessment and role of personal tutors and dissertation supervisors, attendance, etc. We believe that the organisers are genuinely hoping to be helpful to the students and resolve problems but it is important to see things from the perspective of students and ensure the information and their rights and obligations are explained clearly and explicitly in student handbooks and study guides for each course. This also includes clarity of programme title and we recommend replacing "European" by "European Union" in line with what is actually taught.

- Diversity: we believe that it is important that the university aims for a more diverse recruitment in terms of gender and hopefully bringing in international recruits to their team to ensure a diversity of angles and experience. There needs to be diversity of assessment both within and across courses. There needs to be a diversity of methods and approaches taught and within reading lists.

- Tools: The methods training needs to be re-thought to include 1) research design, 2) qualitative methods, and 3) quantitative analysis. We believe that this would be best achieved by a team taught approach with three specialists for each of those components.

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- Openness: There are limits to flexibility in small institutions but the degree should explicitly include the possibility of choosing up to two approved outside options from other relevant Masters, perhaps language or specific methods courses if available, etc.

- Effectiveness: We encourage the team to rethink the specificities of the way they launch the degree, perhaps focusing on opening the programme in English only initially and only opening a Greek language stream if numbers are sufficient (or teaching some courses in English only and only some in two languages). They should also strengthen the already encouraging student experiences (sustain the trip to Brussels and student journal which are good, but perhaps try to negotiate placement in various administrations or companies to improve students' employability).

With those changes, we believe that the proposed programme could be a very valuable addition to the offering of postgraduate degrees in Cyprus and in the region. While those are strong and sometimes very important recommendations, they can all be implemented fairly easily and checked by future evaluation Committees and as such, the programme should be accredited.

D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Michael Bruter (Chair)	
Sylvia Kritzinger	
Elias Dinas	
John Butcher	
Tasos Lamprou	

Date: …28 June 2019…………