

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 08/07/2019

Higher Education Institution's response

- **Higher education institution:**

NEAPOLIS UNIVERSITY PAFOS

- **Town:** PAFOS

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

In Greek: Μεταπτυχιακό στην Πολιτική και Διακυβέρνηση της ΕΕ, 90 ECTS, 12/18 Μήνες

In English: MSc in EU Politics and Governance, 90 ECTS, 12/18 Months

- **Language of instruction:** Greek and English

- **Programme's status**

New programme: X

Currently operating:

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 and 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015 and N. 47(I)/2016].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee’s (EEC’s) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI’s response must follow below the EEC’s comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.1.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

Dear Members of the CYQAA Board,

Although we fully recognize that the ultimate decision is always at the mandate of the Board of the CYQAA, nevertheless, it is a great pleasure to attest that such a prestigious EEC (Full Professor from : Oxford University, LSE, Vienna University, UK Open University) clearly states at page 1 (Introduction) that “**the degree should receive accreditation**” in both the conventional and the DL form.

We also strongly believe that always there is room for improvement and, thus, we hereby submit our response integrating and satisfying all recommendations and suggestions of the EEC for both the Conventional and the DL program. More precisely:

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

GENERAL COMMENT 1.

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

Answer to the General Comment 1.

Done. Both the Study Curriculum and the course descriptions have been revised in order to improve transparency of procedures and the research focus of the Master. **See, ANNEX1, and Answers 1.1-1.4.**

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.

Comment 1.1

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.

Answer 1.1

Done. The new name of the Programme will be:

In Greek: Μεταπτυχιακό στην Πολιτική και Διακυβέρνηση της ΕΕ

In English: MSc in EU Politics and Governance

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

Comment 1.2.1

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.)

Answer 1.2.1

Done. Course descriptions MPA585, and MEP400 have been revised accordingly. **See, ANNEX**

1. Study Curriculum

Comment 1.2.2

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.

Answer 1.2.2

Done. See, ANNEX 1 Study Curriculum, Section 5. Two more optional courses have been added:

- i. DIRSS621 Contemporary Issues in Global Politics.
- ii. DIRSS622 Special Topics in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East Security.

Comment 1.2.3

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 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.

Answer 1.2.3

Done. See, ANNEX 1 Study Curriculum, Section 5. In the first semester the students choose one compulsory course METH600 and 3 out of 9 elective courses.

In the second semester the students choose 4 out of the remaining 6 optional courses.

Comment 1.2.4

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.

Answer 1.2.4

Done.

In order to improve clarity on the teaching language and transparency additional and more specific criteria have been added in the study guide. Moreover, students even if they participate in the Greek or the English Masters program, are able to choose to write their midterm assessment or their masters dissertation in English. **See ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum, sections 3 and 4.**

Comment 1.3

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.

Answer 1.3

Done.

The study curriculum has been revised accordingly 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. **See ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum, section 4, 5.**

Comment 1.4

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.

Answer 1.4

Done.

The Advisory Board of the program has a consultative status and brings together senior individuals, usually combining expertise from both the academia and the “industry”. Currently, the Advisory Board of the program consists of prominent personalities with large applied experience in EU politics and governance. namely:

1. Georgia Lali, former Director of the European Commission and TFGR.
2. Mikulas Dzurinda, former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Slovakia and currently President of Wilfried Martens Center for European Studies.
3. George Iacovou, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus.
4. Androulla Vassiliou, former Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth of the European Commission.

As we explained to the EEC, after the accreditation of the program, we will be happy to enhance the Advisory Board further, with prominent academics, which was not easy for us to do at the current stage, meaning before accreditation. In the meantime, we have ensured the participation of rigorous scholars as visiting lectures and we expect that at list some of them will also become members of the advisory board, as follows:

1. Prof. Kalypso Nicolaidis, University of Oxford
<https://www.politics.ox.ac.uk/academic-faculty/kalypso-nicolaidis.html>
2. Prof. Christopher Hill, University of Cambridge

https://www.polis.cam.ac.uk/Staff_and_Students/christopher-hill-sir-patrick-sheehy-professor-of-international-relations

3. Prof. Federico Fabbrini, Brexit Institute & Director, Law Research Centre, DCU
https://www.dcu.ie/law_and_government/people/federico-fabbrini.shtml
4. Prof. Leila Simona Talani, Professor in International Political Economy, King's College London
<https://ces.fas.harvard.edu/people/leila-simona-talani>
5. Dr. Nora Siklodi, Lecturer in Politics, University of Portsmouth
<http://www2.port.ac.uk/school-of-social-historical-and-literary-studies/staff/dr-nora-siklodi.html>

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

GENERAL COMMENT 2.

“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”.

Answer to the General Comment 2.

Done. See answers 2.1-2.7

Comments:

Comment 2.1

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 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”;

Answer 2.1

Done. The course has been renamed according to the EEC suggestion. The new name of the course is “Research Design and Empirical Methods in the Social Sciences”. We also provide a new course description and a new study guide which are compatible with the EEC suggestions. **See, ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum.**

Comment 2.2

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.

Answer 2.2

Done. All the course descriptions have been updated including clear and transparent midterm assessments within and across courses. None of the midterm assessment is a written exam. The weight of the final exams was reduced to the 60% of the total grade in all courses and the weight of the midterm assessment increased to 40%. **See, ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum, section 4, 7, 8, 10, 15.**

Comment 2.3

- 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.

Answer 2.3

Done. All the course descriptions now include research articles.

See, ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum, section 15.

Comment 2.4

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.

Answer 2.4

Done. More diverse reading lists in terms of nationality and gender of authors have been prepared.

See, ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum, section 15.

Comment 2.5

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.

Answer 2.5

Done.

Students are now able to write master dissertations and midterm assessments in English regardless of the language of the programme. **See ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum, Section 4.**

Comment 2.6

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.

Answer 2.6

Done.

Specific details of all midterm assessments, activities and self-evaluations exercises are explicitly mentioned in course descriptions and study curriculum. **See ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum.**

Comment 2.7

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.

Answer 2.7

Done. There are now specific tasks, activities and exercises providing information on how detail (e.g. 3.000-4000 words regarding the written assessments and 100-300 words regarding the activities and self-evaluation exercises) and how long (10-30 minutes) students are expected to dedicate. **See ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum.**

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

General Comment 3.

Absence of women in the teaching personnel.
Better link to other departments and faculties working on the same field.

Answer to General Comment 3.

Done. See answers to comments 3.1-3.4.

Comments:

Comment 3.1

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.

Answer 3.1

Done.

All components of the course are taught by two full time staff (Dr. Georgios Maris and Dr. Michailina Siakalli), and one part-time staff with experience in the course (Dr. Ioannis Galariotis – European University Institute – Florence). **See, ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum).**

Comment 3.2

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.

Answer 3.2

Done.

Three more women have been added as a teaching staff in the academic program both for conventional and distance learning programmes.

- i. Dr. Michailina Siakali, Lecturer in Statistics, Neapolis University Pafos
- ii. Dr. Artemis Savvidou, Lecturer in Criminal Law, Neapolis University Pafos
- iii. Dr. Maria Angelopoulou, Visiting Staff

See, ANNEX 4, CV's and ANNEX 1, Study Curriculum.

Comment 3.3

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 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.

Answer 3.3

Done.

NUP has a comprehensive academic staff Mentoring Policy. **See, ANNEX 3, NUP ACADEMIC MENTORING POLICY -DL 01.713.**

Comment 3.4

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.

Answer 3.4

Done. The following rigorous scholars have been agreed to participate:

1. Prof. Kalypso Nicolaidis, University of Oxford
<https://www.politics.ox.ac.uk/academic-faculty/kalypso-nicolaidis.html>
2. Prof. Christopher Hill, University of Cambridge
https://www.polis.cam.ac.uk/Staff_and_Students/christopher-hill-sir-patrick-sheehy-professor-of-international-relations
3. Prof. Federico Fabbrini, Brexit Institute & Director, Law Research Centre, DCU

https://www.dcu.ie/law_and_government/people/federico-fabbrini.shtml

4. Prof. Leila Simona Talani, Professor in International Political Economy, King's College London

<https://ces.fas.harvard.edu/people/leila-simona-talani>

5. Dr. Nora Siklodi, Lecturer in Politics, University of Portsmouth

<http://www2.port.ac.uk/school-of-social-historical-and-literary-studies/staff/dr-nora-siklodi.html>

See, ANNEX 5, Communication.

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

GENERAL COMMENT 4

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

Answers General Comment 4.

Done. See answers 4.1 and 4.2.

Comment 4.1

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

Answer 4.1

Done. NUP has in place a comprehensive Personal Advisor Policy. **See, ANNEX 2, Personal Advisor - NUP Policy 07.300.docx.**

Comment 4.2

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

Answer 4.2

Done. NUP has endorsed a comprehensive student's participatory approach at numerous levels of academic life including the Council of the University, the Senate, the Department's Councils, as well as the Pedagogical Planning Committee of the Distance Learning Unit. This participatory and interactive approach towards the NUP students encompasses not only the students attempting conventional program but distance learning students as well. Additionally, regular meetings take place between the Rector and the Heads of Departments with the students representatives at various occasions and specific cases.

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.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

General Comment 5

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.

Answer General Comment 5

Done.

The University has presented to the EEC a comprehensive feasibility study of which the department is fully aware off and prior consultations have been realized.

Comments:

Comment 5.1

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.

Answer 5.1

Done. In study curriculum you can now find in section 17, information regarding Open Access European Databases. **See, ANNEX 1 Study Curriculum.**

- 6. Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)**
- 7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)**
- 8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)**

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Overall, we believe that the University and prospective programme director have put together a coherent proposal for distance students 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.

Answer

Done. See, answers section 1 in this document.

- 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.

Answer

Done. See, answers section 2 in this document.

- 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.

Answer

Done. See, answers section 2 in this document.

- 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.

Answer

Done. See, answers section 1, 2 and 3 in this document.

- 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.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Pantelis Sklias	Rector	
Georgia Christou	Head of Quality Assurance Department	

Date: 08/07/2019