

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 28 July 2020

## External Evaluation Report (Programmatic)

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School of Philosophy/Faculty of Letters
- **Department/ Sector:** Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies (=BMGS) and History and Archaeology (=HIS/ARC)
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle) In Greek:**

Διατμηματικό Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα στις Βυζαντινές Σπουδές και τη Λατινική Ανατολή (= ΔΜΠΒΣ&ΛΑ), επιπέδου μάστερ (Ενάμισι έτος, 90 ECTS)

Διατμηματικό Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα στις Βυζαντινές Σπουδές και τη Λατινική Ανατολή, διδακτορικού επιπέδου (PhD)

### In English:

Interdepartmental Postgraduate Programme in Byzantine Studies and the Latin East (=IPPBS&LE), Master's Degree (One and half year, 90 ECTS)  
Interdepartmental Postgraduate Programme in Byzantine Studies and the Latin East, Doctoral Degree (PhD)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek (for the MA) and Greek, English, French, German, Italian, Russian (for the PhD)
- **Programme's status**  
**New programme:** No  
**Currently operating:** Yes



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



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**The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].**



## A. Introduction

*This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.*

We have been appointed by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education as the External Evaluation Committee to evaluate the M.A. Interdepartmental Postgraduate Programme of the Departments of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies and History and Archaeology of the University of Cyprus: «Byzantine Studies and the Latin East»

We have studied the application file, which included the modified programme: «Byzantine Studies and the Latin East», academic timetable, faculty CV's, and general information about the University policies and procedures. We have also been provided with the Agency's specific Guidelines for postgraduate Programmes of Studies adopted in May 2017.

On July 27th, 2020, we were invited via Zoom to hold a meeting with the Rector of the University, the Dean of the School of Philosophy, the Academics involved in the Programme, the administrative staff of the School of Postgraduate Studies, the Secretaries of the relevant Departments, a good number of postgraduate students, a few on the postdoctoral level, and the Associate Director of the Central Library of the University. A digital form on the Postgraduate Programme was also provided. The Dean and the co-ordinators of the Programme gave us a thorough presentation and discussed all aspects of the Programme with the faculty members. We were also informed of the projects undertaken by the teaching staff, the laboratories of the Department of Archaeology and the Archaeological Research Unit of the University.

II. We were provided with the Internal Evaluation procedure comments concerning the quality and the completeness of the application submitted by the institution of higher education (Doc. 200.1), as well as the overall acceptance of and participation in the quality assurance procedures, by the institution in general and by the Programme of study under evaluation in particular. We were satisfied with the submitted application. We pointed out some omissions in our detailed comments, but those do not detract from our overall positive assessment. We were highly impressed by the degree of co-operation of the collaborating Departments and the University. All participating members made every effort to address our questions; were honest and self-reflective with regard to every area of concern we identified, and were receptive to suggestions about the Programme directions or minor improvements.



## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>Costas N. Constantinides</b>	Professor Emeritus of Byzantine History	University of Ioannina
<b>Alexandros Alexakis</b>	Professor of Byzantine Literature	University of Ioannina
<b>Niels Gaul</b>	A.G. Leventis Professor in Byzantine Studies	University of Edinburgh
<b>Ilias Giarenis</b>	Associate Professor of History of Byzantine Education and Learning	Ionian University
<b>George Christodoulou</b>	Undergraduate Student of Studies in Greek Culture	Open University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

### 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.**

## 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:*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

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

#### Standards

- *The programme of study:*
  - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
  - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
  - *benefits from external expertise*
  - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
  - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
  - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
  - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
  - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
  - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*

- *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

### **1.3 Public information**

#### Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*
  - *qualification awarded*
  - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *pass rates*
  - *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

### **1.4 Information management**

#### Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*



You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

### Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The leadership of the University of Cyprus and Faculty of Letters have been very supportive of our work and provided information on and access to all relevant issues and materials.

Members of academic staff in the two contributing departments, Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies and History & Archaeology, take a clear interest in this programme, that has only recently been amended to better fit the UCY context. In 2016, the previous IPP in Byzantine Studies was amended into the IPP in Byzantine Studies & the Latin East (IPPBS&LE), and indeed both on Master's and doctoral level many students work on the intersection of the Greek and Latin mediaeval and early modern worlds.

The IPPBS&LE has its own dedicated website at <https://www.ucy.ac.cy/byz/el/> and staff take much care to update both the Greek and English versions regularly. The website contains a description of the programme (history, aims); specifies admissions criteria to both Master's programmes; offers a survey of the two pathways, ECTS requirements, and a list of available courses.

The website of UCY's Graduate School offers easy access to all documents relating to postgraduate studies.

The guidelines for quality assurance are clear and the material provided in context with this review covered all the areas required; at the same time, the CYQAA provides clear guidance for quality assurance procedure and results are published on the CYQAA website.

### Strengths

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

The IPPBS&LE is a highly commendable example of inter-departmental initiative, particularly appropriate to the needs of Cypriot society; it is an asset in UCY's pursuit of becoming a top international Institution.

The programme is periodically reviewed.

Information about performance indicators is systematically gathered and analysed.

The programme keeps contacts with former students and follows their career paths.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

The programme objectives and learning outcomes still very much denote their origin in two departments and three 'disciplines': for the benefit of the students and the programme, the number of bullet points should be significantly reduced and thus offer a concise idea of what the programme actually intends to achieve.

The list of courses on the programme website should state how many of these courses are likely to be available in any given year/during the two to three semesters that a student follows coursework in the Master's programme.

Information about assessment procedures should be added to the website.

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



<b>Sub-area</b>		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
<b>1.1</b>	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
<b>1.2</b>	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant
<b>1.3</b>	Public information	Compliant
<b>1.4</b>	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**

### **2.1 Process of teaching and learning**

#### Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

### **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

- *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 and method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

The process of teaching and learning adequately supports students' individual and social development. It is flexible, as it considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate; the Study Programme offers two options for the



acquisition of the ECTS necessary for the successful completion of the Programme. It uses different pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes. Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating their learning process; they make presentations of certain topics and of their essays, and take part in the Colloquium in Byzantine Studies and the Latin East, which constitutes an integral part of the Study Programme. The Colloquium is an excellent venue which gives students the opportunity to interact with speakers from Cyprus and abroad on topics closely related to the discipline of the Programme.

Student-centered learning is substantially implemented.

Modern methods and tools are used in teaching, supporting the use of modern educational technologies.

Mutual respect and a close interaction between learner and teacher are promoted.

Theory and praxis are interconnected; teaching introduces the students to the discipline and guides them to the presentation of their work, composition of essays or field work. Students are actively involved in research through their participation in research projects and programmes regarding the disciplines of the Study Programme, most of which encourage international collaboration and close interaction with distinguished Academics from both Cyprus and other countries. Practical training is regularly organised and effectively supports achievement of planned learning outcomes.

Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures. It is transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner through substantial feedback.

The criteria for and method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are clearly published in advance, and accessible through the internet site of the Programme in both Greek and English.

### Strengths

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

The two alternative options for the acquisition of the ECTS necessary for the successful completion of the Programme are an important advantage.

### 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.*

A higher degree of uniformity in the assessment method of the Seminars of the Study Programme would be preferred. Methodological Seminars which could enable students to understand the primary sources and prepare for further studies, such as Greek Palaeography, are suggested. More specialized topics would be necessary as well. A closer contact with archive material and the libraries, especially for philology and archaeology, would also be helpful.

Given the small number of students, the regulation of five (5) students as a minimum for the operation of a Seminar needs to be revisited; a minimum of three (3) students is recommended instead.

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

	<i>Non-compliant/</i>
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Sub-area		<i>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Partially compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

#### Sub-areas

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

#### 3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

##### Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

### **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**

#### Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

### **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

#### Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*
- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*



- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

The Programme employs nine (two on unpaid and one on sabbatical leave) highly competent scholars ranking from Assistant to Full Professor, who have an impressive track of publishing and attracting funds through various competitive programmes. Recruitment of faculty is subject to State Laws which provide for a system of checks and balances that ensures impartial and objective assessment of prospective candidates. Promotion of the teaching staff is contingent upon their publication, research, grant award and student evaluation record. From a number of presentations, it emerged that the faculty members employ advanced and innovative teaching methods, usually in conjunction with a number of research programmes they are supervising. Reknown visiting scholars contribute to the teaching programme, usually through lectures, workshops and seminars.

### Strengths

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

Number and quality of publications of the Faculty.

Participation in numerous externally funded competitive research programmes most of which serve innovative and novel approaches to the major issues of Byzantine Studies.

Participation of the Faculty in major International and local conferences.

Numerous publications on the topic of the Latin East from the 11<sup>th</sup> c. onwards including Frankish and Venetian Cyprus.

Students participate (usually in salaried positions or through competitive University bursaries “Euagoras” and “Praxandros” scholarships) in research programmes run by the Faculty.

All members of the teaching staff are fully qualified to offer a quality programme of study.

Both MA theses and research programmes are very close to the faculty members’ research interests.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the Programme, the faculty is exposed to a wider scope of scholarly issues in Byzantine and related fields Studies (Western Europe, Medieval Latin East, etc.).

Given the number of publications of the teaching staff, research activities and teaching engagement seem to be evenly balanced.

### 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.*



Recruitment of more MA students is highly recommended. However, this is something that cannot be addressed as a problem by the Faculty alone. A programme such as the one under review can easily attract foreign students if a) Encourage more Erasmus collaborations and participation in seminars perhaps taught in a foreign language, b) Subsidized student housing, is provided by the University. c) The campus is better connected to the city and d) The School of Philosophy acquires its own teaching and administration building.

A more aggressive advertising campaign should be pursued, stressing the interdisciplinary nature of the MA Programme and its substantial contribution to the education of a number of young scholars on how to further advance to Doctoral studies and eventually join the ranks of Academia.

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

<b>Sub-area</b>		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
<b>3.1</b>	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
<b>3.2</b>	Teaching staff number and status	Partially compliant
<b>3.3</b>	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**

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

##### **4.2 Student progression**

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

##### **4.3 Student recognition**

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

#### 4.4 Student certification

##### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

##### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

Much of the information required for this section is provided in succinct and clear terms through the relevant sections of the webpage of the Programme ( <http://www.ucy.ac.cy/byz/el/master/application-master> ; <http://www.ucy.ac.cy/byz/el/master/admission-master> ; <http://www.ucy.ac.cy/byz/el/master/academic-requirements-master> ; etc.). Student admission, admission process and criteria are simple and leave no space for exceptions in their implementation. Assessment of the students' prior preparation/education is obtained by means of a writing sample (up to 4000 words long) and two letters of recommendation. Students are evaluated not only by constant monitoring of their progress through their attendance and examination in six courses and the composition of a Masters' thesis (up to 25,000 words long), (or alternatively attendance and examination in nine courses), but also through their participation in the proceedings of the Laboratory of Byzantine and Medieval Studies. All these activities have been assigned a number of ECTS which upon the completion of the entire Programme amount to 90. All activities of the students are listed in the abstract that supplements their MA diploma (diploma supplement).

##### Strengths

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

Small classes.

Dedicated and highly qualified faculty.

Comprehensive interdisciplinary Programme of Studies

Full support of students within a frame of programme rules that are clear and easy to implement.

All four stages of a students course of studies (Admission, progression, recognition and certification) are in full compliance with the European directives.

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.*

A rather high rate of attrition (at least according to the statistics provided by the coordinators), which should be addressed.

An interview of the candidates before the final list of the succesful ones would be highly recommended.

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

<b>Sub-area</b>		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
<b>4.1</b>	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
<b>4.2</b>	Student progression	Compliant
<b>4.3</b>	Student recognition	Compliant
<b>4.4</b>	Student certification	Compliant

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

### Sub-areas

#### 5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

#### 5.2 Physical resources

#### 5.3 Human support resources

#### 5.4 Student support

### 5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

#### Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

### 5.2 Physical resources

#### Standards

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

### 5.3 Human support resources

#### 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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

Teaching and learning resources and materials provided to students can be considered as adequate. Student-centred learning is also taken into account regarding the plan and provision of the learning resources. The premises of the University and the physical resources at the University Library are regarded as adequate to support the Programme; most of the books of the library collections can be borrowed by the students of the Programme.

Human support resources are adequate for the Programme; the qualified administrative staff needs to be further strengthened.

Student support meets the needs of a diverse population, with options regarding the successful completion of the Programme; the first option requires the composition of a thesis, whereas the second alternatively allows a successful assessment in three more Seminars of the Programme. Students are informed about the services available to them. Their mobility across other education systems is adequately encouraged, but could be further improved through a wider use of Erasmus Programmes; the mobility within Cyprus' education system can also be strengthened.

### Strengths

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

Students receive a close and effective counselling by the staff of the Programme; Relationships between staff and teachers are effective. The Colloquium of the Programme also plays an important role in strengthening the interaction between students and teaching staff, whereas the rich collection of the University Library together with its work facilities provides a functional place for the study.

### 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.*

A wider digital resources collection regarding the disciplines of the Programme is recommended. IT infrastructure could be further improved. Mobility of the students within Cyprus and European countries can be improved. Review and updating of the web links in the research tools section so that it becomes more functional and more user friendly for the students. is recommended

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
<b>5.1</b>	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
<b>5.2</b>	Physical resources	Compliant
<b>5.3</b>	Human support resources	Compliant
<b>5.4</b>	Student support	Compliant



## 6. Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)

### Sub-areas

- 6.1 Distance learning philosophy and methodology
- 6.2 Distance learning material at the appropriate level according to EQF
- 6.3 Interaction plan and Interactive weekly activities
- 6.4 Study guides

### 6.1 Distance learning philosophy and methodology

#### Standards

- *The distance learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Feedback processes for students in relation to written assignments are set.*
- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on distance learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*

### 6.2 Distance learning material at the appropriate level according to EQF

#### Standards

- *Twelve weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The distance 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 distance learning, which is responsible for the support of the distance learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*

### 6.3 Interaction plan and Interactive weekly activities

#### Standards

- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - *among students*
  - *between students and teaching staff*
  - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students and teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of distance learning.*

### 6.4 Study guides

#### Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with distance 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:*
  - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *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)*
  - *Weekly outline of set activities and exercises and clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
  - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *Is the nature of the programme compatible with distance learning delivery?*
- *How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *Are the academics qualified to teach in the distance learning programme?*

**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.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Strengths**

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

**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.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

<b>Sub-area</b>		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
<b>6.1</b>	Distance learning philosophy and methodology	Not applicable
<b>6.2</b>	Distance learning material at the appropriate level according to EQF	Not applicable
<b>6.3</b>	Interaction plan and Interactive weekly activities	Not applicable
<b>6.4</b>	Study guides	Not applicable

## 7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

### Sub-areas

#### 7.1 Selection criteria and requirements

#### 7.2 Proposal and dissertation

#### 7.3 Supervision and committees

### 7.1 Selection criteria and requirements

#### Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
  - *the examinations*
  - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
  - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

### 7.2 Proposal and dissertation

#### Standards

- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
  - *the chapters that are contained*
  - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
  - *the minimum word limit*
  - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

### 7.3 Supervision and committees

#### Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*

- *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
- *support for writing research papers*
- *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?*

### *Findings*

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

The EEC had a long discussion with the doctoral candidates and two PhD holders from the Programme under review. They expressed their general satisfaction with their conditions of study and the prospects the PhD opened regarding their professional advancement in Academia and research. Despite some reservations of the EEC members the PhD candidates supported the requirement for comprehensive exams in the early stages of their Doctoral work. They also stated that they were pleased in general with living conditions in Nicosia during their PhD study. The presentation and the regulations of the Programme made clear that PhD candidates receive intensive supervision especially in the early stages of the preparation of their PhD thesis through the oral Comprehensive exams, the detailed proposal for the PhD, and their obligation to participate in the meetings of the Laboratory of Byzantine and Medieval Studies. The presentation of their research in the course of a Lab session is also another vital component of the PhD preparation.

### *Strengths*

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

Close monitoring of the students' progress towards completion of the requirements for their PhD degree.

A considerable number of successfully completed PhD dissertations.

Good international placement of a number of PhD holders of this Programme.

Employment of PhD candidates in research programmes conducted by Faculty members.

Possibilities for University Fellowships and grants.

### *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.*

In order to facilitate the progress of the PhD students, their comprehensive examination needs to be placed at an earlier stage of the Programme; the first academic year of the Programme is highly recommended for this. We also think that the interview has to be an integral and compulsory part of the selection procedure of proposals for the Programme. For additional suggestions see the conclusion and final remarks section (D) below.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
7.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Compliant
7.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
7.3	Supervision and committees	Compliant

## 8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

### Sub-areas

- 8.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement
- 8.2 The joint programme

### 8.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement

#### Standards

- *The joint programme is offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems.*
- *The terms and conditions of the joint programme are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:*
  - *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
  - *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, including funding, sharing of costs and income, resources for mobility of staff and students*
  - *Admission and selection procedures for students*
  - *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
  - *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*

- *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*

## 8.2 The joint programme

### Standards

- *The partner universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes.*
- *The joint programme is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design, delivery and further development of the programme.*
- *Aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated, including a joint syllabus, language policy, as well as an account of the intended added value of the programme.*
- *Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Does the joint study programme conform to the requirements of a study programme offered at the specific level?*
- *Is there a system that assures the quality of joint provision and guarantees that the aims of the programme are met?*
- *Do the mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the joint study programme take into consideration the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)? Are they adopted by all the universities involved?*
- *Is the division of responsibilities in ensuring quality clearly defined among the partner universities?*
- *Is relevant information about the programme, e.g. admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures, well documented and published by taking into account the specific needs of students?*
- *What is the added value of the programme of study?*
- *Is there a sustainable funding strategy among the partner universities? Explain.*

### 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.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

### Strengths

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

### 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.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
8.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	Not applicable
8.2	The joint programme	Not applicable

## **D. Conclusions and final remarks**

*Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.*

In conclusion, the EEC was impressed with both the quality and strength of the IPPBS&LE at Master's and Doctoral level as well as the wider UCY context, as presented during the evaluation.

In terms of the proven track record and wide range of the academic expertise that the members of academic staff involved in the Programme bring to it, the IPPBS&LE clearly has the potential of being a world-leading programme and thus of becoming a core element in UCY's strategic goals.

With regard to the Master's level, the wide range of courses on offer to students – especially if expanded/revised in line with our recommendations – is a huge asset and should be a major selling point of the Programme (e.g. with a view to recruiting more international students), as it allows access to highly specialised knowledge and lays the foundation for critical thinking and/or research. The Programme is uniquely placed to train new generations of experts at the interface between fields (Byzantine, Eastern Mediterranean, Mediaeval, Early Modern) who possess skills in a wide range of research methods and approaches. The interdisciplinary structure of IPPBS&LE rightly requires students to take courses in the Programme's three constituent areas – philology & literature; history; art & archaeology – and thus allows them to acquire a strong basis in order to meaningfully combine these areas in their own work: as cutting-edge research has become increasingly interdisciplinary in recent years and moved beyond the confines of a single discipline, this is very timely indeed. Even at this level, academic staff go out of their way to encourage students to pursue original research as part of their coursework. The skills thus acquired enable those who move into the labour market after their Master's degree to manage and transform complex work contexts and take strategic approaches, while it crucially enables those pursuing doctoral studies to conduct cutting-edge research at the forefront of current knowledge (as testified by the success of the Programme's alumnae/i who moved abroad for their PhDs). Further thought should be given to internationalising the Programme, either by offering instruction in Modern Greek to incoming international students or by offering some courses in languages other than Greek.





With regard to the doctoral level, IPPBS&LE offers students access to first-class supervision; the academic staff's very active research and publication record sets an excellent model to the students and ensures that theses in the Programme pursue knowledge at the most advanced frontier of the respective field. The PhD follows organically the Master, but further thought could be given to ensure smooth transition, e.g. with regard to the comprehensive examination or the inclusion of clearly research-led teaching at Master's level (it might be worthwhile considering replacing a few of the survey-style courses currently on offer with more specialised courses focusing on single events, texts, objects in far more detail, in order to teach research skills, rather than striving to cover the whole of the Byzantine period). The EEC was informed that most students tend to use their full eight years to complete their doctorate: this is too long by international standards, but clearly related to lack of resources – necessitating research and library trips abroad – and lack of funding – forcing students to work while pursuing their studies. UCY would need to tackle and solve both these aspects in order to achieve its strategic goals – we emphasise that this is not an issue that the academic staff running IPPBS&LE could solve by themselves. Top-notch international cooperation is in place, and should be further expanded.

Though the overall assessment is quite positive the EEC would like to highlight the following suggestions which might further strengthen the postgraduate Programme:

- It is essential that UCY supports Humanities and the Faculty of Letters by planning a special building within the university campus to house all three Departments and their postgraduate Programmes.
- All policies and procedures should be communicated to staff and students clearly, preferably in the form of an IPPBS&LE handbook.
- Professors on unpaid or sabbatical leave should be replaced with temporary appointments.
- The participation of both Master's and PhD students in university exchanges through the Erasmus+ programme is strongly recommended.
- Students' participation in the Programme and in the quality assurance process is strongly recommended.
- Strict rules should prevent students from plagiarism.

Especially with regard to the Master's level:

- Encourage promising postgraduate students to select the dissertation pathway rather than the three additional seminars to achieve their Master's degrees.
- Attract foreign students to join the postgraduate Programme by offering reasonable accommodation within the campus and a summer school for learning Modern Greek.
- The postgraduate Programme should perhaps consider adding in parenthesis the speciality on the Master's degree (i.e. Byzantine Philology, Byzantine History, Byzantine Archaeology, or Mediaeval History).

The Committee would like to reiterate that it is strongly supportive of the PhD Programme, which is for the great benefit of the two collaborating departments and the postgraduate programmes of UCY. However, we would like to use this section to highlight our key suggestions for the improvement of the programme:

- The provision of a taught methodology course is essential.
- The comprehensive examination should come no later than the end of the first year of studies as otherwise the writing of the thesis starts later and extends for longer than desirable; along these lines the duration of the average PhD must be reduced: eight years is far too long by international standards (see our comments on funding and resources above).
- A limit to the number of PhD supervisees per academic staff member should be introduced – a number between 5–8 appears reasonable – and full workload credit should be given to supervisors by reducing their administrative obligations in other respects.
- The supervisor should not be a member of the examining committee of the thesis due to the conflict of interests and the probability to influence the members of the examining committee; if the supervisor's presence is required during the examination s/he could attend as an observer.
- The possible outcome of the examination process should include the possibility of resubmission subject to major or minor corrections and amendments within a precise timeframe of completion.



- The adoption of a clear upper word limit for the doctoral dissertation is required. The figure of 100,000 words, including footnotes, would be a good basis for this and in line with international practice (in fact, word limits might also be considered for Master's dissertations and regular coursework).
- The provision of office space and computer equipment and other digital facilities for PhD students is strongly recommended.
- The provision for modest financial support to every PhD student, through scholarships and bursaries to pursue research in special libraries or museums, or to purchase materials necessary for his/her research, or even to attend conferences is also encouraged.
- The speciality of the PhD student ought to be given precisely in the degree (i.e. Byzantine philology, Byzantine History, Byzantine Archaeology, Mediaeval History).



**E. Signatures of the EEC**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Costas N. Constantinides	
Alexandros Alexakis	
Niels Gaul	
Ilias Giarenis	
George Christodoulou	

**Date:** 28 July 2020