

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 30/06/2020

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Cyprus

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό στην Ψυχολογία

In English:

PhD in Psychology

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** 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 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

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.*

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

EEC comments for each ESG are in italics and followed by Response.

1.3.3 The Department applies an effective strategy of attracting high-level students from Cyprus and abroad.

The department is successful in attracting high-level students from Cyprus (e.g., 80% of students with top-level results in the pan-Cyprian exams choose the University of Cyprus). On the international level of recruitment, there is a clear ambition but the department did not yet develop a strategy to achieve this ambition. Currently, due to the fact that most of the teaching is in Greek, even at the PhD level, international students largely originate from Greece. There is a clear opportunity to deliver coherent sets of courses at both the master's and PhD levels in English. Focused programs aimed at international students could be built this way.

Response by the Department: The Department in taking systematic steps in recruiting international students for the graduate programs and for the Ph.D. Psychology program. In addition to students from Greece, we are now able to recruit students who are fluent in English as part of our partnership with the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE). Starting September 2020, we will begin offering courses in English and hosting students from other European universities.

We should also highlight the following departmental international initiatives for international programs, both in Greek and English.

First, we have an international MA in School Counseling which is offered in Greek in collaboration with the University of Athens. The program is offered in Greek but has created a significant momentum of collaboration, including Erasmus exchange opportunities.

Second, a master's program in English (Cognitive Systems) is already being offered by our department in collaboration with the Open University of Cyprus.

Third, several postgraduate and doctoral classes are currently being offered in English in cohorts with non-Greek speaking students.

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

EEC comments for each ESG are in italics and followed by Response.

2.1.4 The specific departmental strategy to ensure quality is implicit rather than explicitly articulated and openly communicated. The strategy is reactive (solving problems as they occur) rather than proactive.

Response by the Department: The University has established a policy for quality assurance in teaching (https://www.ucy.ac.cy/graduateschool/documents/Phd/ENGLISH_QualityofTeachingPolicyDocument.pdf)

Furthermore, the following departmental systems are in place in order to ensure quality of teaching:

1. The Department has implemented a mentoring system for courses taught by outside collaborators who are not permanent faculty members.
2. The Department chair only has access to course evaluations for non-permanent faculty. The Chair typically meets with returning instructors prior to the new semester to discuss course evaluations and develop a plan for improvement, if indicated.
3. A new 'mentoring' and 'feedback' system has been introduced by the University in 2019 and will start implementing next semester (Fall semester 2020).
4. Teaching evaluations are included in the promotion process of faculty, at each level.
5. In addition, the following procedures have been adopted by the Department.
 - a. Content of courses to undergo review by a departmental committee for updates, examination of overlaps, coordination of courses with their pre-requisites.
 - b. Course assessments: request KEDIMA to provide course-specific feedback to the assessment methodology in each course.
 - c. We could make a recommendation to the University Rector's Council to include a section on Teaching quality and evaluation as part of the annual review process for allocation of the Research Stipend which is based on merit.

2.2.7 Website needs to be updated immediately. Particularly for the PhD programs, the English webpages are not as updated as the ones in Greek.

Response by the Department: We acknowledge that our website needs improvement in order to be more interactive and attractive and communicate to all stakeholders the importance, relevance, and value of our programs. A new University Committee has been assigned to review all departmental websites. The Department is committed to improving this important tool by allocating resources to improve it.

2.2.10. Quality assurance of the teaching process, however, is rather weak. Student evaluations are performed bi-annually but there is no articulated procedure for using this feedback in the service of improving teaching. New staff members are mentored. Quality assurance of assessment is absent. Staff members autonomically develop and perform assessment procedures without any peer review or monitoring at the level of a program committee or exam committee.



Response by the Department: The department follows the examination and grading procedures of the University. Grade moderation is required for the thesis courses at the graduate level and the doctoral dissertation. There are no other moderation requirements. Each course has at least two different types of evaluation methods. All graduate level courses incorporate evaluation methods that integrate content, require analysis and synthesis of material. These methods include review papers, research proposals, review of articles, oral presentations, take home examinations, open book examinations, etc.

The Departments Graduate Committees also monitor overall grade point averages of student cohorts. The Department Chair also monitors course grades for individual courses. However, these procedures are more informal and we agree that the Department should make steps to create a more formal monitoring process. We have made plans to incorporate obtain course-specific feedback from KEDIMA for mandatory courses.



3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

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4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

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5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

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6. Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)

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7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC comments for each ESG are in italics and followed by Response.

There is an opportunity to rethink the comprehensive evaluation such that it is not just a rehash of previous successful examinations (e.g., one possible aim could be to have the student write a review paper in the domain of the future doctoral work). Also, the statutory delay between the comprehensive exam and the presentation of the research proposal could be minimized.

Response by the Department: The Department Council believes that the Comprehensive examination should ensure that PhD students have sufficient knowledge in their area(s) of study and that they are able to: a) select relevant and current literature(s) to inform their research, b) conduct critical literature reviews, c) select relevant and current methodological approaches and describe those approaches, d) use appropriate academic language to communicate their knowledge and understanding of the empirical literature. The department strives for continuous improvement of the comprehensive examination process and format in order to achieve the above objectives. The current format of the examination was designed in order to facilitate the student's ability to integrate information learned in the three targeted courses in a way that is relevant to their dissertation. The examination questions are customized to each student's needs. The following customized process takes place: The student meets with the professor responsible for designing the questions for the target course and to discuss the dissertation topic and relevant literature pertaining to the course in association with the research topic. The professor guides the student on relevant literature. Typically, students prepare for 2 months for their comprehensive examination. The intention is not to be merely retested on courses. On the contrary, through this process, they enrich their theoretical knowledge and demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize information.

Currently, the University regulations indicate that there should be a two-semester time lapse between these two milestones. We agree that this waiting period creates an unnecessary delay. We have already submitted a request to the Graduate School to relax the two-semester requirement and we have indications that our proposal will be successful.



8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
George Spanoudis	Associate Professor, Chairman	
Charis Psaltis	Associate Professor, Vice- Chair	
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