

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 28/12/2020

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

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Χημεία (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Chemistry (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor Degree)

- **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)

Point	Issue Identified	Proposed Action
1. Study Program and Study Programme's Design & Development		
1 (p. 8, 1.2.1)	Webpage not updated, English version of webpage not consistent with Greek version, not a good recruitment channel.	An effort by the University (centrally) has been initiated and is currently underway to update all departmental webpages based on a common template. The departmental IT staff and the departmental Promotion & Outreach Committee have been assigned the task of ensuring that all material, especially that pertaining to the Programmes of Study, is updated and that the English and Greek versions of the webpage are in full alignment, in order to render the departmental webpage an appealing tool for recruitment of potential candidates.
2 (p. 8, 1.2.2)	No formal procedure exists for dealing with disagreement between the 2 evaluators of the the diploma thesis/final research dissertation.	The Department has decided that, effective immediately, in case the two grades deviate by more than 2 points out of 10, then the Diploma Thesis Coordinator will serve as a 3 rd evaluator. The 3 rd evaluator's grade will be averaged with the one out of the original two grades closest to it, to produce the student's final grade.
3 (p. 8, 1.2.2-1.2.3)	Not clear how teaching and assessment content & format fits with the intended learning outcomes; Quality control of courses left entirely up to individual staff.	The Department supports individual staff initiatives in course development and makes every effort to assign each course to a member of staff qualified to teach it. In order to make the process more formal, as required by the Evaluation Committee, the Department has decided to introduce the following policies: (a) Teaching content and assessment format, as described in the course syllabus, to be formally checked for compliance with learning outcomes by the Undergraduate Studies Committee. Each member of staff will be expected to make the syllabus available to the Committee for existing courses, the first time a new

		<p>course is developed and subsequently every time a syllabus is significantly changed.</p> <p>(b) Each new academic will be required to coordinate closely with the Undergraduate Studies Committee and senior members of their sector, to ensure that each newly proposed course is compliant with the learning outcomes, and any overlaps with other existing courses are avoided. Each new course will also need to receive approval from the departmental Council before officially being introduced to the Programme.</p> <p>(c) Student representatives will be encouraged to discuss with the involved members of staff any cases of assessments where they feel the content has deviated from learning objectives, in an effort to reach consensus, with possible participation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee.</p>
<p>4 (p. 8, 1.3)</p>	<p>Detailed course content not available, possible discrepancy between level and extent of subject coverage between this programme and ones taught abroad.</p>	<p>A detailed syllabus currently exists for each offered course (and was actually included in the materials submitted for this evaluation). It is the responsibility of each staff member to provide the syllabus to all registered students at the beginning of each semester, in the language of instruction, and this is a University rule, currently followed by all staff members.</p> <p>Regarding course content, every effort is made so that the programme and the individual courses are compliant with internationally accepted standards and are directly comparable to those encountered in foreign Universities of similar standing as UCY.</p> <p>Additionally, the Department has now decided the following:</p> <p>(a) Both Greek and English versions of the syllabus for each course will be added to the planned updated departmental webpage, in order to make it accessible to all interested parties.</p> <p>(b) Each staff member will be responsible for updating the syllabus for each of their courses when deemed necessary, and informing accordingly the Undergraduate Studies Committee, prior to the beginning of the semester in which the new syllabus is expected to go into effect, as to ensure that any</p>

		<p>suggested changes are compliant with the Programme's intended learning outcomes. This will also serve as a check of avoiding overlap between courses.</p> <p>(c) It will be asked of new members of staff, upon joining the Department, to develop new and timely specialty/ elective courses, comparable to ones offered in competitive Universities abroad. To do so, it will be expected of the new colleague to coordinate closely with the Undergraduate Studies Committee and senior members of their respective sector, in order to determine an acceptable course content, that better serves the programme's learning objectives.</p>
5 (p. 8, 1.4)	Skills that students are expected to acquire are not described sufficiently in learning outcomes and learning objectives of each course.	The Department has decided that specific mention of particular skills will be added in learning objectives and learning outcomes for each course, as these are described in the syllabus, under responsibility of the corresponding staff member. The Undergraduate Studies Committee will circulate examples, and individual staff members will be expected to introduce these changes when their syllabus is next updated, and promptly forward it to the Undergraduate Studies Committee.
6 (p. 8-9, 1.8 & Areas of improvement and recommendations)	Learning outcomes are only generally defined for individual courses; Unclear how they map into those of the overall UG program.	<p>It is the belief of the Department that currently there is generally good alignment between learning outcomes for individual courses and those of the overall Programme.</p> <p>The Department has decided to ask all individual staff members to make this connection more explicit in the next version of their course syllabus and every time the syllabus is updated. Also, from now on, new staff members will be required to coordinate closely with the Undergraduate Studies Committee in order to ensure this connection is always adhered to when developing a new course.</p>

<p>7 (p. 9, Findings section)</p>	<p>Processes to ensure quality control should be formal and more transparent.</p>	<p>A number of new policies approved by the Department Council, described in other parts of this document, in response to concerns raised by the Evaluation Committee, will be introduced with immediate effect, and are expected to address issues of transparency and quality control internally, within the Department. The responsibility to check if they are adhered to, will rest with the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the department's Chairperson.</p>
<p>8 (p. 9, Findings section)</p>	<p>Level of knowledge and skills acquired by students should be investigated more thoroughly.</p>	<p>It is the belief of the Department that the system of continuous evaluation currently in place is sufficient to evaluate student take-away knowledge and skills in each course.</p> <p>The Department has decided that the Undergraduate Studies Committee will take on a more active role in assuring that the format, level and content of assessments is appropriate to achieve desired learning outcomes. This will be assessed by requiring staff members to provide exam papers, answer keys, marking schemes, and random samples of student work, as well as by encouraging frequent discussions between the UGS Committee, teaching staff and student representatives on the topic.</p> <p>Additionally, the University (centrally) is currently investigating the possibility of introducing an "exit questionnaire" for final-year students, in an effort to assess their own perspective on take-away knowledge and skills gained during their studies. As soon as this is approved, the Department expresses its willingness to introduce it as a valuable source of feedback, to help inform and improve its future practices.</p>
<p>9 (p. 10, Areas of improvement and recommendations)</p>	<p>No peer- or expert-assessment of teaching staff and of assessment methods is in place.</p>	<p>The following have been approved by the Department Council, to address this issue:</p> <p>(a) The University (centrally) will train 2 senior staff members of the department to play the role of academic mentors. The department will make use of academic mentors for all new faculty hires with no prior teaching experience, i.e. who do not possess official academic teaching qualification. The academic mentor could serve as peer reviewer for the new members of staff during their first 1-2 years on the job, assisting them to improve their teaching practices.</p>

		<p>(b) The department’s Chairperson will have the authority to peer-assess one lecture for each staff member per semester.</p> <p>(c) Part of the strategic planning of the Department is to create an advisory board of external experts, including ones from other academic institutions. These experts will be invited to advise the Department on how to improve assessment methods, based on their experience from their own institutions.</p>
<p>10 (p. 10, Areas of improvement and recommendations)</p>	<p>Student input in program and course development should be sought.</p>	<p>Student evaluations of each course are already being taken into account by individual staff members, and help improve their practices and address issues identified by the students.</p> <p>Additionally, the Department Council has decided the following:</p> <p>(a) The exit questionnaire mentioned above (see point 8) will be exploited as a valuable source of student feedback at the end of their studies.</p> <p>(b) A more formal interaction will be enacted between the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the elected student representatives, as a way of directly listening to student input in the course of their studies and detecting areas that can be improved in real time.</p>

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

2. Teaching, Learning & Student Assessment		
11 (p. 13, 2.5)	Lack of record keeping regarding assessment system and assessment criteria leads to these not always being clear to students.	The Department Council has decided that assessment methods (including percentages per exam or assignment) and criteria will be clearly stated in each course syllabus and specifically explained to the students at the start of the semester. For assignments, such as student presentations, the criteria may be agreed upon with the students, in an effort to include them in the process. The agreed methods and criteria of assessment should be adhered to by everyone, and the Undergraduate Studies Committee may be in contact with elected student representatives to ensure this is the case.
12 (p. 13, 2.2 and comments after table)	Low number of students leads to some (elective) courses not being offered every year.	This is a long-term University issue, directly related to student intake, and beyond the department's control. On a departmental level, we have recently started applying a policy of setting a maximum number of students per elective course, in an effort to achieve a more even distribution of students to the offered electives and to reduce the possibility of cancelling some of them due to low numbers.

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

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13 (p. 16-17, 3.2.3 and Areas of improvement and recommendations)	No formal teaching training exists for new staff.	<p>The Department Council has decided that:</p> <p>(a) Training seminars and courses offered by the University’s Centre for Learning & Teaching (ΚΕΔΙΜΑ) to new teaching staff will be made mandatory for those with no prior academic teaching experience.</p> <p>(b) The Department will consider joining a formal and more elaborate new staff training scheme as soon as one is introduced centrally by the University.</p>
14 (p. 16, comments after table)	Student evaluations for individual courses are only seen by the professor and the department chair.	<p>Student evaluation data is included in the promotion packages of staff and viewed by Promotion Special Committee members. Their use may be (otherwise) limited by University policies and this is considered a delicate topic, currently under discussion in University governing bodies.</p> <p>The Department Council has decided that:</p> <p>(a) Statistics from student evaluations for each staff member will be made available on a departmental intranet, with any personal comments censored, only in case University Policies allow the use of this data.</p> <p>(b) Where the department Chairperson identifies (statistically significant) poor evaluations for 2 times in a row, discuss with the member of staff and make suggestions or refer them to appropriate training courses from the Centre of Learning and Teaching (ΚΕΔΙΜΑ).</p> <p>(c) When the student evaluations involve Special Teaching Staff, hired part-time to fill in individual course needs, the Undergraduate Studies Committee should have access to those evaluations, when considering the same candidate for a new appointment.</p>

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

4. Students		
15 (p. 20, 4.2)	In other Universities the evaluation process is public and transparent, that is not the case here.	See suggestion (a) in point 14 above.
16 (p. 21, Areas of improvement and recommendations)	It is the perception of some students that the level of courses is not always competitive internationally.	<p>The Department does not share this opinion. Numerous former graduates of this Programme (including both the department's Chairperson and the Coordinator of the USC) have been successful in carrying out Postgraduate Studies in internationally competitive Universities, and are of the opinion that: (a) The courses offered by those Universities on the UG level are comparable to this UG Programme; (b) The take-away knowledge and skills provided by this UG Programme are sufficient to enable a smooth transition to a PG Programme, including those of world leading US or European Universities.</p> <p>Also, the Department, on several occasions, has attracted undergraduate students from high-ranking Universities abroad to take courses or diploma thesis while on Erasmus+ or carry out summer internships in its laboratories, which may be indicative of the international recognizability of its programme.</p> <p>The Department remains committed to delivering high quality courses. In this spirit, it will formally require of new faculty members to offer elective courses in fields of current interest, in an effort to enrich its current range of topics covered and keep its UG programme competitive.</p>
17 (p. 21, Areas of improvement and recommendations)	It is the perception of some students that the program is not aligned with an industrial research career (limited interaction of students with industry).	<p>The Department has taken decisions to:</p> <p>(a) Introduce an Industry Placement course for students, that will lead to strengthening of relations between the Department and local industry, help bring students in contact with potential future employers and help students develop a practical skill-set required by industry. The Department has already approved this course, to be offered after the 2nd year of studies and a syllabus has been prepared. This is expected to go into</p>

		<p>effect in 2021. Contacts with potential employers will be established either directly or through the Liaison Office of the University. A academic Coordinator for this course will soon be appointed.</p> <p>(b) Invite local industry representatives to participate in an advisory body of experts, in order to gain industry input in further developing its UG programme and introducing industry-relevant components.</p>
<p>18 (p. 21, Areas of improvement and recommendations)</p>	<p>Mis-match of admission dates between UCY and Greek Universities causing issues with student registration and retention.</p>	<p>This is beyond the control of the Department.</p>



5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

“With respect to these facilities, UC chemistry is performing above expectations of the EEC.”

“No suggested improvements in this area.”



6. Additional for distance learning programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A



7. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A



8. Additional for joint programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions & Final Remarks		
19 (p. 28, Conclusion & Final remarks)	No re-take exams provision is in place. Should be explained to students why the current system is advantageous.	<p>The exams system is defined by University rules and does not include re-take exams provisions.</p> <p>The Department feels that the continuous evaluation system currently in place, serves its intended purpose, by enabling a more in-depth transfer of knowledge, keeping the student constantly engaged with coursework throughout each semester of studies, while giving the student several opportunities to increase their grades, via diverse types of assessments in each course.</p> <p>The system and its advantages are clearly explained to students at the beginning of their studies by the Coordinator of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, and this will continue to be done.</p>

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Constantina Kapnissi-Christodoulou	Associate Professor, Chair of the Department	
Epameinondas Leontidis	Professor, Dean of the School of Pure and Applied Sciences	
Savvas Georgiades	Assistant Professor, Coordinator of the Undergraduate Program of Study	
Sophia Charalambous-Hayes	Associate Professor, Coordinator of the Graduate Program of Study	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

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