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

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Doc. 300.1.1

Date: June 30, 2021

External Evaluation Report

(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

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

- **Town: Nicosia**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Faculty of Social Sciences and Education

- **Department/ Sector:** Education

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

  In Greek:

  Αυτοχρηματοδοτούμενο Διατμηματικό Διεπιστημονικό Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα
      «Μάστερ σε Σπουδές Φύλου»

  In English:

   Self-Financed Inter-Departmental Interdisciplinary

  Graduate Program "Master in Gender Studies"

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English and Greek

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations
In English: Concentrations

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A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

An application for evaluation and accreditation for the Self-Financed Inter-Departmental Interdisciplinary Graduate Program "Master in Gender Studies" coordinated by the department of Education at the University of Cyprus has been filed with the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA). The COVID-19 pandemic precluded an onsite visit on the part of the evaluation committee to the campus of the University of Cyprus. Therefore, the evaluation was conducted entirely online. A pre-meeting was held with Alexia Pilakouri, CYQAA, on March 26 2021 in order to establish the basis of the review.

The virtual site visit was performed on June 3 2021 and included interviews with the vice-rector for Academic Affairs (Prof. Irene-Anna Diakidoy), leaders and members of the Department of Education and other participating departments, the Head of the Gender Studies Coordination Committee (Associate Prof. Zelia Gregoriou) and several teachers in the programme, as well as administrative staff, library representatives, and current and former students of the department.

The vice-rector outlined the history of the university and its strategic priorities to contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of Cyprus, the centrality of its Graduate School and the strategic efforts on interdisciplinarity and internationalization of education and research. The vice rector highlighted the much-needed nature of the programs in gender studies, both to the university and to Cypriot society and its unique level of interdisciplinarity. The UNESCO chair in gender equity given to the department of Education was the starting point of the program which brings together a wide range of scholars and courses across the social sciences and humanities.

The evaluation committee was well supported by the CAQUAA during its virtual site visit. There were no difficulties with the technology.

The following review is constrained by the limitations of an off-site visit, however the external review committee (henceforth, 'the committee') felt it gained an objective sense of the program, its strengths and potential areas of improvement.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Ulrika Dahl	Professor of Gender studies	Uppsala University, Sweden
Andrea Petö	Professor of Gender studies	Central European University, Vienna, Austria
William Spurlin	Professor of English and Vice-Dean/Education, College of Business, Arts & Social Sciences	Brunel University London, UK
Dimitrios Gousopoulos	MA Student	Open University of Cyprus, Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

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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.***

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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*

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- *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.*

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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 programme of study for the MA in Gender Studies clearly identifies the overall programme objectives with explicit intended learning outcomes stated throughout. Inaugurated in 2012, the programme objectives are also set by the prestigious UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality, and is the only graduate programme of its kind in women's and queer studies in Cyprus. The committee was impressed with the ambition and the high quality of the Masters programme overall, and the depth and breadth of study required from students. Situated in the Education Department, the programme aims to challenge dominant perceptions of heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity both historically and presently, and it examines such issues as gender, sexuality, the body, discourse, and materiality from a variety cross-disciplinary perspectives, all of which relate to the purposes of HE of the Council of Europe, particularly in regard to preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society. The preparation of students through teaching, learning, and research involves a broad and advanced interdisciplinary knowledge base that includes literature, philosophy, aesthetics, French and European studies, Greek studies, Business and Public Administration, History, and Law. Visiting scholars with expertise in gender and sexuality often lecture to supplement the course offerings or teach on existing ones, and methods of assessment are congruent with the high academic standards expected of students. The programme design is ambitious, focusing on both interdisciplinarity and the intersectionalities of gender and sexuality with race, ethnicity, class, disability, and other subject positions, and the programme prepares students well both in feminist, queer, and critical race theory (and related areas) and in research methodologies and for doctoral work through a solid foundation in coursework and the choice of an MA thesis. Most important, the programme prepares students to address social inequities in whatever career paths they decide to pursue by addressing the persistence of misogyny and homophobia in a society that the faculty describe as ensconced in patriarchal attitudes and systemic gender inequalities, and presents students with a powerful impetus and knowledge base in order to enact social change. The programme undergoes periodic review with monitoring and feedback, and students are very much involved in the review of the programme with student feedback actively sought and taken seriously. There are structures in place to ensure and maintain a high quality of research-based teaching.

Overall, the committee concludes that the quality of the MA programme in gender studies is high, and facilitates an inclusive environment that engages with the surrounding community. It is the result of successful interdisciplinary and interdepartmental collaboration and has been approved by all relevant decision-making bodies at the university. Students design the content and pace of their self-financed degree with their supervisors and exam committees in accordance with clear programme expectations. The programme is unique, timely and highly relevant for many sectors in the job market. Its objectives are on the whole reflected in the content, and content is continuously revised in relation to new theoretical, political, methodological, and to some degree technological developments. The programme corresponds to EQFs framework and is of international standard. Coherence is ensured through close collaborations between participating departments, but more importantly, participating faculty members, who also work closely in committees and by lecturing in one another's courses. Close collaboration with several societal sectors as well as with exchange programmes and visiting scholars, along with instruction in English ensures that students enhance general competencies and skills. Scopes and objectives for the programme and its individual courses are clearly articulated in general study plans and syllabi. As it is a self-financed programme, many students

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work concurrently, which affects duration of study as well as content of their work. The programme is visible, both within the university and in broader society.

Quality assurance:

Policy for quality assurance of the programme is done both internally and externally, has a formal status and is publicly available. First, the programme is designed by academics (members of the Teaching and Research Faculty), usually coordinators of the Programme of Study who then go to great lengths to ensure that the programme runs smoothly at both academic and administrative levels. The programme is examined and approved through several levels; departmental, faculty, the Graduate school, Senate and University council. Programme revision, when needed for theoretical, technological, or surrounding societal or student recruitment reasons, is also clearly regulated. Revision of courses in this interdisciplinary programme is the responsibility of individual faculty members and in turn also go through a number of levels of approval.

Continuous *internal* monitoring and feedback of programmes ensures quality and relevance of education in relation to labour market needs. Teaching is evaluated internally at the end of each semester by students via special standardized questionnaires which are processed by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The CTL, an independent entity of the University of Cyprus, develops policies on learning, teaching and evaluation, supports departments and staff, and assesses quality of teaching through a standardized system. In addition, autonomous faculties within the University of Cyprus evaluate their own teaching via clear structures and subcommittees with different responsibilities.

External evaluation of study programmes takes place every five years under the supervision of the Rector's Office and based on international practices and quality indicators, in order to ensure their objectivity and validity. Appropriate documentation (self-reports) and on-site visits are the basis for reports prepared by external evaluation committees consisting of senior scholars from European and US universities with no links to the University of Cyprus who have been approved by the Senate following a proposal by the Rector's Council.

Quality of admission:

The committee finds that admissions into the programme is of high international standard. Graduate admissions are managed by the Graduate School via a call for Graduate admissions announced twice a year (September and January for spring and winter admission, respectively). Applications are submitted electronically through an online application system. The number of positions available in each field of study, application procedure, eligibility criteria, tuition and fee, deadlines for applying and other relevant information are included. Requirements for admission are comparable to international standards in the field.

The general requirements for MA admission are clear and comparable to other programmes in the field. Selection criteria are clear: academic credentials, competence in academic writing, ability to articulate with gender studies informed concepts and arguments, along with theoretical, methodological and political sophistication in relevant concerning gender and sexuality. Prior work experience in gender and sexuality related fields and ability to work independently are merits. The committee finds that this is in accordance with international standards in the field.

Orientation and student body:

From a large number of applicants, the number of admitted students is 7-8. Two of them are expected to be international students, most of whom are from Greece. Courses are taught in English unless all present are Greek. The student profile is mixed, consisting both of those who aim for a career in gender studies or for working on gender-related issues in NGOs and other public sectors. Prior to commencing studies, students are offered an orientation of the programme's philosophy, structure, courses, and others dimensions. Information and coordination meetings are held with students at the beginning of each term, where the semester's content and structure (courses to be offered, international scholar to teach the Seminar, upcoming conferences and events) are discussed. Communication with the students is ongoing, both at a personal level and through a Facebook page and Facebook groups for dissemination of information, exchange and discussion, both about the programme and about topics on gender policy and academic events at national and international level. Each student's path of studies is based on a review of his/her transcript up to that point by his/her academic advisor.

As an interdisciplinary programme, Gender Studies attracts a diverse range of students and topics in the field, which are then accommodated by the interdisciplinary staff. As this is a self-financing programme, students work during their course of study; which impacts both duration of studies and ability to focus on their work. Students are very satisfied with the programme and its teaching faculty, but would like to see more institutional resources brought in the programme

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

The committee wants to stress the unique and urgent nature of the MA programme insofar as it is the only one available in Cyprus. This is significant and noteworthy and it has an impact on the larger society. At the same time, it is an international programme, attracting students primarily, but not only, from Greece. The impact of the programme both on the university, the greater Cyprus community and the Greek and international fields of gender research is noteworthy. The outstanding strengths in terms of design, coherence, and ongoing monitoring and review lay in the ambition and interdisciplinary breadth of the programme; its excellent design with core and recommended courses, the weighting of credits with or without an MA thesis, and the connection to actual material practices, lived experiences, and everyday struggles around gender and sexual dissidence. The connection to the UNESCO Chair also gives this programme prestige with the commitment to democracy through increasing women's participation. The programme is also commendable because students rate it highly and view it as a safe space to discuss different lived experiences and possibilities of gender and sexual difference beyond heteronormative inscriptions.   The honesty, passion, and commitment to the study of gender and sexuality by students and faculty are also commendable as this seems to drive the programme.

The programme is transparently documented in the report as up to both international, European and university standards following clear and regular evaluation, both internal and external.

There is a clear relationship between courses, and the structure of the programme is logical, in large part due to the very collegial nature of the programme. Courses are cross-listed across departments. Teachers collaborate by offering guest lectures in one another's courses, building useful links between topics and subjects, and by continuously developing syllabi and inviting international guests. Involved faculty are attentive to new scholarship and theoretical and methodological developments and incorporate those into seminars and recruitment of visiting scholars.

Feedback from former students has resulted in, among other things, "Femi-Read", a reading group open to current and former students, as well as to other students and scholars interested in "thinking with gender" and that centres

on new work in a range of disciplines. The program illuminates the outreach and impact of the programme on both the university and the broader society; students also have networks through the programme.

There is clear procedure and standards for academic quality for addressing modifications. The programme is supported by competent and dedicated administrative staff with clear division of responsibilities, located in different departments, mostly in education which is the programme's home. The students are provided guidance in selecting Erasmus courses. Information about courses is clearly communicated in digital platforms.

Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities in a timely manner. This is a small program so there is a direct communication with each student. Academic processes and regulations are harmonized with those set by Graduate School. The latter are transparent. Where student and program needs peg the need for a certain procedure's modification, this is brought to the Department Council and Graduate College and negotiated, always with reference to standards of academic quality and uninhibited student support and growth.

The impact of the Programme on its students has been immense and enduring, both at the level of employment and at the level of mobilization and awareness promoting, within and beyond the university.

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.

As the programme builds, the committee has the following suggestions for strengthening the infrastructure of a thus far very promising programme:

A more systematic evaluation process that reflects and assesses the unique qualities and challenges faced by an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental MA programme organized and taught by faculty from different departments. This would make evaluations better equipped to address specific problems and point to further developments. A clearer process for how student feedback is incorporated and addressed in evaluations would also help the programme in its ongoing development.

The MA programme would be greatly helped by increased support from the University, as will be noted in other parts of this report. Whilst the programme meets its targets and has clearly laid out its objectives and learning outcomes, and is meeting most of those, University support is needed for recruitment of students—local, European (especially with Erasmus involvement), and overseas—who should be flocking to study in this innovative programme, though the medium of instruction would perhaps have to change almost exclusively to English as the programme grows and broadens, whilst preserving the courses that focus on the specificity of local and Greek culture and language for students who are native speakers of Greek and for international and Erasmus students who have mastered literacy in Greek. The programme also needs support with its identity and placement within the University structures as it is based in a Department of Education, which enables it to have access to administrative support, but the programme is also highly interdisciplinary, as it crosses so many other subject areas and should have additional University support. While Universities often seem to value the crossing of disciplines, structures are seldom in place to support and resource interdisciplinary programmes in the same way as established subjects of study confined to a single Department only, and in the case of this programme, the University could do more to

make the work in gender and sexuality produced by faculty and students more visible externally and internationally which could have positive impact on enrolments as well as bring in possibilities for further external funding.

The university needs to provide stronger support for students with care responsibilities and work commitments as this would enhance quality of work. Academia is to a large extent built for people who do not have primary care responsibilities, making time lines and schedules hard to meet. There are both security risks and logistical challenges with holding classes at night. More financial support for the programme as a whole, including institutional resources and fellowships, would enable students, especially those with many commitments, to focus more on their PhD research.

To increase the student numbers more efforts could be invested in recruiting students from Greece and in promoting those who return. Fellowships for the students would decrease the number of dropouts and time spent in the programme.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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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 and student-centred teaching methodology

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 the 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)?*

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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 overall programme integrates feminist and queer theory and gender and queer-focused research, and engages students to reflect on the social, historical, and discursive construction of gender and sexuality and how regimes of patriarchy, heteronormativity, misogyny and other sites of domination interrelate and produce kinship, familial, and other social relations in local, national, cross-cultural, and multinational contexts. The programme allows for students to study the critical intersections between academic knowledge and social justice issues and enables students to translate theoretical concepts from, but not limited to, feminist and queer theory, to meaningful public-facing intellectual work, which often becomes the focus of student research. The trifurcated focus between academic knowledge, past and present material conditions, and social activism interconnects theory and practice in the programme, and is also evident in student-organised events around such timely issues as sexual harassment, violence against women, and the ways in which social unrest is mobilised through social media.

Programme structure:

The programme consists of 90 ECTs. The programme is structured around two compulsory core courses, Feminist Theory in semester 1, and Queer Theory and Sexuality Studies in semester 2; as well as a compulsory research course, with the electives discourse analysis, qualitative research, or statistics. There is also a required seminar course entitled Seminar in Gender & Sexuality Studies in the first semester (with the possibility of some students needing to take Gender & Sexuality Studies II for an additional 6 ECTs in the 2nd semester if there are deficits in their number of graduate credits as some electives are 12 ECTs and others only 10 ECTs). This comes to 36 ECTs for compulsory courses, 6 ECTs for the one seminar, and the remaining courses are electives with 48 ECTs (4 courses) for the coursework track without the thesis or 24 ECTs (2 courses) plus Master Thesis I and II (24 ECTs) and the thesis, where students remain in continued registration until the thesis is completed and defended before a three-member committee. In both tracks, the total graduate ECTs come to 90 ECTs. The electives are multidisciplinary and include such courses as Gender and Cinema; Gender Equality and Human Rights; Gender and Language; Race, Gender & Postcolonial Feminism; Byzantine Masculinities & Femininities; and Gender, Sexuality, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Literature & Culture, to name a few, as well as opportunities for independent study. The MA degree must be completed within a minimum of three semesters and in a maximum of eight semesters.

The curriculum overall is enriching, as are the detailed reading lists for each course, and the material learned in the required theoretical courses certainly can be used by students as critical lenses for their elective courses. The main teaching methodologies are lecture, discussion, close readings of texts both in class and outside of class by the student (both in terms of preparation for seminars and for examinations, papers, and projects), and student in-class presentations.

Assessment is typical for academic training and range from mid-term or final examinations, short written critical responses to readings or topics, and final papers ranging from 5,000-10,000 words depending on other required assessments given in the rest of the course. EDU 641 (Gender & Education) was particularly noteworthy and creative for assigning a final group or individual project. Practical training seems to be centered on research methodologies, and in dissertation supervision students learn to identify relevant methods and skills for their projects.

The University Teaching and Learning Centre provides support for students, particularly around issues pertaining to improving academic writing; whilst the Centre also trains teachers and instructors to teach.

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

The uniqueness and the innovative nature of the programme, in terms of the foundational coursework and opportunities for sustained research, both of which are framed by feminist and queer theory and multiple research approaches (discourse analysis, philosophical, theoretical, historical, empirical), with a range of interdisciplinary elective courses with which to study gender and sexuality further from English, French and European Studies, Business Studies and Public Administration, Education, History, Law and Human Rights Studies, Greek Studies, Philosophy, and Aesthetics, is highly laudable with the connection of the programme to the UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality.

The connections students are able to make between theory and practice, through research methodologies and attention to issues of social justice as they pertain specifically to gender and sexuality, are excellent, and students spoke positively, at the onsite visit online, of the programme's multidisciplinary focus and the time to think that the programme enables.

Students spoke very highly of the structure of the MA programme of study, with its foundations in feminist and queer theory and then branching out to more specialised courses in other subject areas with a feminist and/or queer focus, such as film, law, human rights, literature, media, etc. Students articulated that the programme was broad enough for them to be able to navigate it based on their own intellectual and personal interests and political commitments. Students praised the different perspectives on gender and sexuality presented by the faculty and visiting scholars who teach on the programme. They also stressed the value of the environment itself; the support and collegiality among students and the opportunity to breathe as one student put it. The interdisciplinary nature of the programme, students confirmed, enabled them to take on a wider range of world views and perspectives and appreciate new opportunities for thinking through the lens of gender.

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 committee has a number of suggestions that we think would help an excellent programme become even better.

Course and Programme content: While the programme appears to give more or less equal weight to gender and sexuality, through the two compulsory core courses, to feminist and queer theory; most elective courses centre on gender. The committee recommends strengthening the focus on sexuality, including in particular queer and transgender studies.

Given the objectives of the programme, the committee suggests further attention to the relationship between those objectives and the format of teaching and assessment in line of a similar critique of dominant institutional practices. Several faculty members have creative assignments and themes in their courses and those could be built further on.

Courses on methodologies could be strengthened by moving beyond a focus on lectures and seminar-type discussion on close readings to more practical training and experimentation and more student-led presentations and student debates, like in some of the courses. Student-centred learning could also be strengthened by enabling students to research their own topics, developing assignments that enable considering one's own experiences, languages, cultures, knowledge, and background to bear on the material being studied, thus cultivating the method of situated knowledges.

Individual courses: Individual courses could be further strengthened as postgraduate level by moving beyond introductions and providing familiarity with topics and by developing more assignments like in the courses on Gender and Education and Advanced Reading and Writing Seminar in Theory and Philosophy (and others) where the focus is on what students are doing (analysing, comparing, writing, etc). Similarly, when MA and PhD students take the same courses, we strongly recommend that specific forms of research-related assessments be given to doctoral students in the courses so that assessments could be researched-focused and thus help students learn to think as researchers in gender and sexuality studies.

While assessment is rigorous, and the quality of student written work submitted to us excellent, assessment itself seems rather predictable, consisting mostly of mid-term and final examinations, formal essays of varying lengths, short critical response papers, and student presentations, as mentioned above. We would encourage more creative and student-centred forms of assessment to broaden the range of how students can demonstrate what they have learned that are specifically related to the discipline and, specific to doctoral students, to methodologies of gender/sexuality enquiry.

Research communication and professional training: MA students in gender studies can be further assisted in learning how to convey the importance of attending to gender and sexual difference in public life. For instance, more emphasis could be given on research communication, both within and beyond the university. Student findings could be communicated to press or digital platforms to call attention to gender research and further demonstrate the value of this work as well as via student-organised events.

Course content: In terms of course contents, the committee strongly recommends expanding reading lists beyond their current Eurocentric and Anglo-American focus. Whilst the compulsory core courses certainly cover the broad terrain of feminist and queer theory, more readings from the global South and postcolonial world would enable broader theorisations of feminisms and queer as always already multiple, historical and changing. To that end, slight shifts in course focus could go a long way. For instance, while the course on "gender, race, and postcolonial feminism" certainly is an important intervention in this regard, an emphasis on feminisms could further show that feminism is multi-faceted and plural and not reducible to feminism in the West. Similarly, the module on Gender, Sexuality and Subjectivity in Early Modern Literature and Culture could pluralise 'literature' and 'culture' so as to include early modern literary and cultural texts outside of the West. In addition, there is certainly scope to include postcolonial queer work as a separate. We also recommend including translation as part of research methodology, as well as a higher emphasis on queer methods and interdisciplinary methods.

The University Teaching and Learning Centre provides support for students, particularly around issues pertaining to improving academic writing; but whilst the Centre also trains teachers and instructors to teach, does it work dialogically with this programme to enfold the politics of gender and sexuality into the pedagogical development of those who teach in other areas of the University? This would be an excellent opportunity for the work of the Gender and Sexuality interdisciplinary programme, based in Education, to have effect on the teaching of other disciplines in

other parts of the University, particularly in consideration of the importance of feminist and queer pedagogies in higher education teaching today—and certainly is another way to connect theory and practice.

Finally, further instruction and clarification of the process of thesis writing during Master Thesis I and II would be helpful to students. The Postgraduate Handbook, attached to the report, gives general guidance, but more attention could be given to how supervision for the MA thesis work in an interdisciplinary programme and around how selection of the the three-member committee is made in an interdisciplinary programme containing faculty from a variety of disciplines.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	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.

As gender studies is an interdisciplinary MA programme not offered by one department, questions of teaching and staff are largely the concern of participating departments. These are represented in the coordination and management of the programme it is also the needs of such departments rather than the needs of the programme as such determines hiring and who are responsible for ensuring competence. The programme lists 13 staff, almost all of whom are associate level and from all the participating departments in the programme. Participating teachers and coordinators have impressive CVs, most have international training and experiences as well as many ongoing funded collaborations and they conduct solid and relevant research within their fields. Participating teachers all have experience of MA thesis supervision and committee membership. Each participating teacher contributes with around 6 courses in the programme, most of which are cross-listed by home departments. A couple of teachers (including the programme director) are responsible for the core required courses. Most regular staff in the programme have about 6-9 hours of in-class teaching per week, which suggests a quite heavy teaching load given preparation and evaluation. The programme has a long tradition of annual international visiting scholars. These are leading in the international field and participate with in teaching in the programme.

Staff clearly collaborate across departments and many courses are cross listed. The impressions from the report and the onsite visit are that there are ambitions to connect research and education, even if syllabi suggest a larger emphasis on classic international scholarship than an explicit connection to staff's own research.

Development of teaching occurs largely through interdisciplinary collaboration among teachers; guest-lecturing in one another's classes, co-supervision and exam committee membership, and development and revision of joint

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courses. Teaching is assessed largely through regular student evaluation of courses. Feedback thus appears to largely to come from students.

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

The programme as presented in the report and onsite visit reflects an exceptionally high level of interdisciplinary collaboration by departments with much to gain from the programme's reputation and impact.
The level of coordination and collaboration between teachers required to run the programme is no small feat and deserves special recognition.

Given a high teaching load, the highly qualified staff also has impressive research and publication records and strong records of participation in international scholarly communities.
Staff is experienced in MA and PhD supervision and committee assessment and are all engaged in their respective fields.

The model of the programme; interdisciplinary collaboration in both coursework and assessment of theses, is an excellent way to learn from colleagues and to develop teaching skills and programme profiles together.
Student evaluations of courses indicate committed and qualified teachers with a passion for their areas of teaching and who are committed to developing new and existing courses.
Many teachers also have strong collaborations with other sectors and the surrounding Cypriot society.
Gender studies as such is clearly a flagship of the university.

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 fact that courses and supervision in the MA programme is either interwoven with or on top of a full regular teaching/supervision load raises concerns. The evaluating committee strongly suggests increased support for the programme in order to obtain manageable workloads for its teachers as well as ensuring that qualified teachers can remain in the programme. Currently participating departments are in charge of hiring which means that the programme is shaped by departments' interest in and commitment to gender studies related content rather than by its own needs. The success of the programme is largely due to ongoing commitment by individual scholars. This puts a lot of responsibility on those teachers and can make the programme vulnerable to staff changes. A more robust commitment to the programme from the university would secure the programme's future in a more sustainable long-term fashion. There is clearly great commitment to teaching among participating teachers and high student satisfaction with courses, and the staff works together to develop new courses, but there appears to be little space for teachers to deepen pedagogical and supervisory skills. This too could be prioritized by the university in terms of resources and i the Centre for Learning and Teaching might be helpful beyond questions of evaluation. At the same time, the committee also thinks the programme's teachers have knowledge and skills pertaining to teaching that could be highlighted by the university in its unique style. While there are processes for developing and evaluating courses, and clear collaboration and assessment of teaching, a clear way to recognize and support the significance of this program for the university would be to provide more manageable teaching loads, better structures to support continued professional pedagogical training and exchange, and a clearer career path whereby junior staff would be

supported in developing their teaching and supervision skills. In particular, the committee suggests developing a procedure for training in thesis supervision. This is standard in many universities and helpful for both staff and students.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

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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, processes and criteria

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.

To be considered for admission in the MA programme, which is managed by the Graduate school in the HEI that manages calls bi-annually, students must have BA or MA Degree in Social Sciences or Humanities or in other field of study pending articulation of previous studies' relevance to and/or qualification for Gender Studies, provide transcripts, letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, evidence of academic proficiency in English, prior experience of working on gender and sexuality; all appropriate for the field. Academic policies, admission processes and criteria are clearly communicated to students in advance. Regulations for assessing student progressions are in place, students understand and appreciate criteria for assessment and progression. According to their statements, students had the guidance and support they needed during the admission process. University of Cyprus is in cooperation with other universities in Cyprus and Greece and its degrees are fully recognized (see also Recommendations). There are low drop-out rates and both current and former students are extremely satisfied with the programme.

The programme is quite structured with compulsory core courses, research courses, a required seminar, and electives, and student numbers are fairly low, so it is easy to keep track of student progress. For students who do need to meet the full number of coursework credits, there is an additional Seminar on Gender & Sexuality II for them to take to make up any shortfall of graduate credits, since some electives are 10 ECTs and others are 12 ECTs. Each student as an academic advisor who follows their students' academic progress and monitors any difficulties students may encounter with regard to their studies. Students receive feedback on their assessments for the coursework

through the WebBanner system, which is presumably available to academic advisors as well as a way to reference and monitor student academic progress and difficulties. Predefined, published regulations regarding student progression in general are in place through the University's Postgraduate Handbook, but it is not clear how progress is measured once students reach the thesis stage of their MA studies, for those who elect to do the thesis, once the coursework has been completed, including Master Thesis I and II.

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

Admission and assessment criteria are clear, the website is very informative. The overall standard of the MA programme in gender studies follows those of the Graduate school. There are procedures in place for students to provide feedback in workshops and seminars. Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression are in place and are fine for the coursework part of doctoral study, including the assessments for courses, which fairly standard and demanding, up to the time of the qualifying examination and the preparation and defence of the dissertation proposal. There is good cooperation between different administrators. Syllabi and detailed information about courses are provided at the first meeting of each class. Expected learning outcomes of the program and courses are known to all members of the faculty. Graduates do find jobs both in Cyprus and internationally in sectors relevant to their training, but several students noted that the meaning and qualifications of a degree in gender studies needs to be better conveyed in both Cyprus and Greece.

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 main challenges of this already highly functional programme as the committee sees it, are

1) As the programme is self-financed, many students are unable to study full time due to work commitments which means completion takes quite long and rates are a little vulnerable.

 2) staff are teaching courses on top of full workloads. A better funded programme would provide both staff and students with more time to do their work.

3) More information could be given on the recognition of the MA programme in Greece in particular, because of the ongoing discussion in Greece concerning recognition of degrees obtained from institutions abroad.

4) Clearer instructions and guidelines for the unique dimensions of interdisciplinary Gender studies.

The committee recommends clearer information about the structure for the MA programme in gender studies. While there is significant instruction provided in the Graduate School's handbook, there are unique dimensions to an interdisciplinary programme such as this.

In particular, procedures for supporting and assessing student progression from the time the proposal is defended successfully through to the completion of the thesis would help students. To that end, the committee suggests further clarification and development of its own guidelines to compliment the overall handbook. A programme in Gender Studies, with a focus on gender and sexual dissidence, can usefully challenge the efficacy of the classic model whereby students are often left on their own to complete their theses once coursework and other formal

requirements are made. We would urge the Gender Studies programme to articulate in some more detail the processes of research and writing as synchronous and mutually-inflective processes, even though the division of these categories may be set by the University, and to envision and explain how the supervisory process does and can work in highly supportive ways for students in the final, yet most important, phase of their MA.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Partially compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	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.

The Programme is self-financed. The major outside source of funding for the Program is student tuition. Some teaching and research assistantships are covered by the University and faculty research grants. Fellowships have been awarded through the Leventis Foundation and the University Fellowship scheme Evagoras and Praxandros. Income from tuition is allocated for funding student research activities. Other expenses (reimbursement of visiting scholars, reimbursement of academic and staff for additional teaching load, organization of conferences, seminars and events) are concurrent with those of MA Program in Gender Studies and are covered by that Program's budgeting.

As this is an interdisciplinary programme it does not have an institutional home, or actual space/office where students and faculty can meet. Meetings take place in different faculty offices and the office of the Department of Education responsible for administration. The faculty offices are dispersed in the campus which poses a challenge to get to one appointment to the other and also the darkness in the campus poses security risk. The University is not doing enough to support students with care responsibilities, in particular with regards to evening courses.

The teaching of cross-listed courses does implicate extra cost because those courses are included in faculty regular load (two courses per semester). Remuneration of academic and other personnel for extra teaching is analogous to the remuneration of academic and other personnel of the respective institutions in Cyprus. The opening of the new Equality and Diversity Office is a good step towards addressing the need of the diverse student body. Student Welfare Service is focusing on jobs plus mental health issues.

Self-financing students are eligible for conference grants. The number of students enrolled is small but still big enough to secure the continuity of the program. The students are informed about the services available for them but the counselling service is overburden. Student welfare is well met by the University Student Affairs Office.

The Career Office operates as a link between the students of the University of Cyprus and the labour market. It also coordinates a Summer Placement Programme, advises and informs students about scholarships in postgraduate studies, employment opportunities in and out of the university, organises workshops for the development of skills and various other events related to the students' professional careers.

There are student support mechanisms both at the Department level and centrally through the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service (AASWS). At the Department level, the University of Cyprus has adopted the institution of Academic Advisor. An Academic Adviser who is a member of the Department's Teaching and Research Staff is appointed to each student. The advisor follows the students' academic progress and guides them, particularly in connection with any problems faced in their academic performance. In addition, all academics set office hours when meetings are arranged with the students regarding matters relating to their studies. In addition, through the electronic WebBanner system, students receive feedback on their projects and examinations in the courses they take, as well as other information concerning the course, such as the course outline. Great responsibility is placed on the students to plan their own studies.

At the central level, AASWS supports the students in connection with various functional matters and support is given to students with health, financial and psychological problems. Specifically, the Social Support Office was set up with the objective of providing the best and most effective support to the students in order to ensure equal access to their academic obligations. Students with disabilities, health problems or social and financial problems are able to go the Social Support Office and discuss in confidence any issues they might have in connection with their difficulties they face in their course of their studies. In cooperation with the academic departments, the Office helps them to find ways to deal with their difficulties (for instance, by providing support facilities and adjustments).

The University of Cyprus offers free psychological support and counselling services to all students through the Psychological Support Centre (PSC). The prime aim of this service is to contribute to students' welfare in order to ensure that they have the best possible experience during their studies and thereafter. The services are offered through individual or group therapy and counselling sessions. The usual concerns of students visiting the PSC concern stress, pressure, relationships, mood swings, adjustment to academic life (adjustment, learning etc.) losses and personal or professional decision making. The PSC also offers assessment services (free of charge) to students facing difficulties in learning or adjusting to university life, whether they were admitted through special criteria owing to a disability or health problem, or have encountered some difficulty at a subsequent stage of their studies. The PSC makes suggestions to the Student Welfare Service in connection with cases requiring assistance in their classes or other types of support, thus offering individualised support to the students. Each academic year, the students are re-evaluated in order to monitor their progress and to adjust the support provided according to their needs.

The PSC also organises presentations and workshops on topics related to the students' psychological welfare. It conducts prevention and awareness-raising campaigns on matters related to mental health and welfare, combating the stigma of mental illness, disability or diversity, in cooperation with groups of students and young people, as well as with community agencies and organisations. Such actions can also be offered at the request of groups of students or Departments. In addition, from time to time, the Centre publishes and distributes information in printed form or through its website and informs and advises the Departments and Faculty members on matters of mental health, protection of rights and support to students.

Students expressed their strong satisfaction for the support and guidance they receive from their professors and advisors. Courses were described as demanding, but mostly as a manageable workload. According to students, the programme's structure ensures a self-paced, but also monitored, learning. Flexibility and understanding have been shown during extreme circumstances such as the pandemic.

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

The fee-paying students are paying enough to keep the programme alive which is politically and academically important.

All faculty teaching in the programme are permanent, full-time, tenured academic staff, erudite in teaching and research.

Visiting scholars are invited on the merit and originality or their work and their presence, physical and academic, is stimulating and inspiring.

All are inspired and inspiring teachers and intellectuals. The coordinator of the programme has closed links with gender studies research centers and other gender studies programmes.

The programme provides easily accessible and sufficient resources for students to complete their assignments.

Students have access to tools that ensure an effective and well- structured e-learning environment.

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Information is shared with students regarding seminars and other events relevant to their field of study to support the student mobility across higher education systems.

There is extensive and direct communication with the students.

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.

Again we see the benefits and limits of a self-funded programme. Increased opportunities for fellowships for MA students would secure that recruitment of students is based on merits rather than resources. The programme would be greatly helped by having better support from the university in terms of infrastructure and physical meeting spaces. The special intellectual interests of the students are taken into consideration by financing thematic courses taught by non-faculty which widens the course offerings but contributes to the continued precariousness of academic labour force.

Providing better support for students with care responsibilities would support success rates. This includes support needed for evening courses, including child support and better lighting on campus. While the overall services for students are good, more could be done to support the special needs of gender studies; several students described the programme as a 'safe space' in the university – and while this speaks highly of the importance of the programme, it suggests that the university could do more to support these students and render the value of the programme visible in the broader university and societal structure.

More could be done to support interactive activities; including digital and distance teaching and in-class room teaching so that students are both able to follow programme courses and participants become better equipped at solving problems in a digital and pandemic world.

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

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

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6. **Additional for doctoral programmes** *(ALL ESG)*

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **6.1 Selection criteria and requirements**
> **6.2 Proposal and dissertation**
> **6.3 Supervision and committees**

6.1 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*

6.2 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.*

6.3 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*

- o *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
- o *support for writing research papers*
- o *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.

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		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Not applicable
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Not applicable
6.3	Supervision and committees	Not applicable

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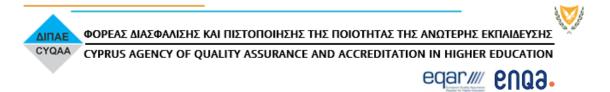
D. Conclusions and final remarks

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.

The committee wishes to congratulate the University of Cyprus and the involved departments and colleagues for committing to such a timely, robust, and promising MA programme. It is of vital importance for society at large as well as for the university that we train gender researchers who can contribute both to societal institutions and policy making, to the work within NGOs and to scholarship and teaching in universities. This means that more resources, both material, infrastructural and visibility-oriented would be helpful for all dimensions of the programme. As it stands, it demonstrates exceptional commitments by dedicated staff and visiting scholars with high profiles and experience with postgraduate education who make the best of what they have. The committee thinks the university should consider all possibilities for further supporting the programme, which is clearly a flagship of the university with high impact on society, democracy and a range of urgent questions ranging from gender equality and sexual rights, to migration and climate change, demographic and political economic change, and arts, literature and culture. Ideally, it should be its own department and endowed with a chair; that way the long-term security of the programme would be guaranteed.

The programme trains students to be qualified to study and assess key societal problems and phenomena through the lens of gender and intersectional perspectives on power. This means they are highly sought after in the broader labour market and can perform a variety of tasks related to gender, equality and justice. In addition, students are qualified to apply for PhD programmes in gender studies in Cyprus and internationally. In terms of the relationship between MA and PhD, the committee wishes to strongly urge the university to think about the future academic job prospects of its graduates as they relate to building robust scholarly traditions in Cyprus in dialogue with international fields. Gender studies is today a vibrant discipline with its own journals, conferences, training programmes and in many places, full departments. In a time when democracy is under threat in many ways and places, it is vital that universities support this work.

As an interdisciplinary programme, the MA in gender studies follows all the procedures of the university in terms of its structures, execution and assessments. It is a successful collaboration between dedicated departments and administrators which points to high levels of collaboration and collegiality. At the same time, most of the labour of teaching, supervision, administration and coordination of programme content falls in the hand of a small number of people and is done on top of other workloads. This makes the programme vulnerable. With more resources and infrastructure, the long-term teaching and supervision needs of the programme, as well as its ability to stay up to date with international developments, could be better accommodated. For instance, if there were more department-like conditions, there would be more resources for recruitment, research funding, as well as library and other resources. This would benefit both students and staff.

The students are the future of gender studies and this programme offers relevant and useful training. It is important that the programme articulates clearly the process of obtaining the MA, in particular, the dimensions concerned with thesis writing. With resources, thesis writing groups, professional training courses, and a clear agenda for presenting work in progress in programme seminars could provide students with helpful steps in what is often a long process of thesis writing; especially for those who are studying part time. Developing clear plans for each student with regulated goals for supervision and feedback would also be helpful. Regular meetings for all students and faculty (that is, of a Town Hall nature) would further the democratic process and feedback from course evaluations

can be followed up in a more structured way. Office space for students and faculty to meet and work would also help foster a sense of community and support the students in their research.

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E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature	
Ulrika Dahl		
Andrea Petö		
William J. Spurlin		
Dimitrios Gousopoulos		
Click to enter Name		
Click to enter Name		

Date: June 30, 2021