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FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 17 Sept 2019

External Evaluation Report

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

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

- **Department/ Sector:** Department/Sector

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

  In Greek:

  ΜΕΤΑΠΤΥΧΙΑΚΟ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ «ΠΝΥΚΑ: ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ, ΘΕΩΡΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΑΞΗ»
  In English:

   PNYX: MA in Political History, Theory and Practice/

  2years/120 ECTS

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

- **Programme's status**
  New programme: Yes
  Currently operating: Choose an item.

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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

A. Introduction

The EEC had a very fruitful and productive onsite visit, including meetings with the Authorities of the OUC, the academic staff of the MA Programme, the administrative staff of the OUC and students' representatives. The EEC followed the agenda set by the CYQAA. The programme of the onsite visit is attached.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Nikolaos Papadakis	Professor at the Dept. of Political Science	University of Crete
Arndt Brendecke	Professor	LMU Munich
Jo Murkens	Associate Professor	London School of Economics and Political sciences
Rob Koper	Professor	Open University of the Netherlands
Marios Xiaris	Student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

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*

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

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

Findings

PNYX is a two-year interdisciplinary Master's Programme in Political History, Theory and Practice. PNYX includes 8 Thematic Units/Modules of 15 ECTS each (that is 120 ETCS in total), which are arranged in four semesters corresponding to four areas of inquiry: Theory (1st semester), History (2nd semester), Technocratic Background in Law and Economics (3rd semester), and Jurisprudence and Rhetoric (4th semester). Each semester consists of two Modules. Students can choose between a thesis and a non-thesis master's degree. To obtain a non-thesis master's degree, students have to successfully complete all 8 Modules of the Master's Programme. To obtain a thesis master's degree, students have to complete a master's thesis of about 12.000-15.000 words (30 ECTS), which is equivalent to two elective and scientifically related Modules of the Master's Programme.

The Programme addresses a wide range of potential audiences: aspiring or practicing politicians, journalists or other publicly engaged individuals dealing professionally with political issues, political communication specialists, and, more importantly, citizens; that is, those citizens wishing to acquire the necessary background for approaching political developments with the maturity and confidence of a qualified potential politician. PNYX also offers to graduates of various Bachelor's degrees the chance to pursue postgraduate studies in a series of interesting specialties (for example, law graduates can specialize in the philosophy of law or international law, graduates of Greek or European Studies can follow Modern History or Social Science Theory, and so forth).

In terms of QA, we should mention that the PNYX is a new MA programme. However, when it starts its operation, its QA procedures will be in line with the QA procedures of the Open University, which supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes. The procedures followed for **reviewing existing programmes of study** are the following: Where the revision relates to essential elements of the programme of study, for example, the offering of a new academic direction or the abolishment of an existing one, or the changing in the structure of a Programme by designing new or removing existing thematic units (courses), and other elements, the Academic Coordinator of the programme submits a detailed request and a justification report to the relevant School. Depending on the School's opinion, the issue is forwarded to the Studies' Committee of OUC and depending on the evaluation, the matter is forwarded for final approval to the Senate. In terms of the **internal evaluation procedures for OUC's programmes of study**, the policy to be followed is determined by the Internal Quality Committee, set up for the purpose of evaluating (internally and externally) and for assuring the quality of the programmes/services offered by OUC, in accordance with the relevant procedures and conditions set forward by the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education. Within the Unit for International Cooperation, Development and

Communication of OUC, operates the Office of Quality Assurance, with a supportive and administrative role with regard to the institutional as well as internal and external evaluation of both the programmes of study and the University services. The internal evaluation (self-evaluation) of curricula is performed by the programmes of studies themselves, using a checklist in the form of a documented assessment report of their educational and research work and services. It will be conducted every three years and the implementation of the process of internal evaluation of each curriculum will be made by the competent Academic Coordinator and if required by additional external members that form the Internal Evaluation Group of the Programme.
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Strengths

PNYX is a well- structured and intensive MA Programme, based on an interdisciplinary approach**.** It has a formal status and is publicly available, while it is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes. Combining elements from the fields of political science, history, social theory, law, economics and international relations, PNYX aims to offer a broad-spectrum, substantial and systematic course of study to every citizen seriously interested in politics. PNYX also offers to graduates of various Bachelor's degrees the chance to pursue postgraduate studies in a series of interesting specialties. Clearly the needs of society, have been taken into account in the study programme design and structure, while given its content it is consistent with developments in society Further, PNYX is a distance- learning academic programme of studies, designed, all the same, for people with heavy professional and family schedules. The role of up-to-date long-distance education technology is catalytic in this respect, inasmuch as this technology helps transcend geographical and time constraints and is aptly combined with the fundamental method of guided selftutoring. Furthermore, the Programme wishes to offer political education that is not purely academic but dynamically oriented towards a constantly evolving political reality, with the primary purpose of producing politically-informed citizens rather than simply the next generation of political scientists. Its anticipated learning outcomes are consistent with the curriculum design. The programme's structure and design reflects the aims of the MA programme, while it also reflect its interdisciplinary approach and rationale. The courses offered are consistent with the 4 main Areas of the Programme. The quality of the academic team in charge of the MA Programme is high, since they are all highly-skilled and qualified in the key areas of the MA Programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC recommends the MA Programme to seek for a good balance between the regional and national perspective on the one hand and the international context, including insights on different regions (i.e. Middle East). Given the interdisciplinary approach adopted, which is highly appreciated, the extent of the topics raised and how broad the MA Programme is in terms of thematics analysed, the EEC encourages the Academic Team to focus on specific insights, parametres and aspects of each sub-section of the modules offered. .

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2:	Non-compliant
3:	Partially compliant
4 or 5:	Compliant

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Quality indicators/criteria			1 - 5
1.1	Academic oversight of the programme design is ensured.		5
1.2	The guide and / or the regulations for quality assurance provide the adequate information and data for the support and management of the programme of study for all the years of study.		5
1.3	Internal Quality Assurance processes safeguard the quality and the fulfillment of the programme's purpose, objectives and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Particularly, the following are taken into consideration:		
	1.3.1	The disclosure of the programme's curricula to the students and their implementation by the teaching staff	5
	1.3.2	The programme webpage information and material	5
	1.3.3	The procedures for the fulfillment of undergraduate and postgraduate assignments / practical training	5
	1.3.4	The procedures for the conduct and the format of the examinations and for student assessment	5
	1.3.5	**Students' participation procedures for the improvement of the programme and of the educational process**	4
1.4	The knowledge (theoretical and/or factual) gained is of the appropriate level to which the programme of study corresponds to, according to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).		5
1.5	The skills (cognitive and practical) obtained are of the appropriate level to which the programme of study corresponds to, according to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).		5
1.6	The responsibility and autonomy (the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility) are of the appropriate level to which the programme of study corresponds to, according to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).		5
1.7	The purpose and objectives of the programme are consistent with the expected learning outcomes and with the mission and the strategy of the institution.		5
1.8	The following ensure the achievement of the programme's purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes:		
	1.8.1	The number of courses	5
	1.8.2	The programme's content	5

	1.8.3	The methods of assessment	5
	1.8.4	The teaching material	5
	1.8.5	The equipment	4
	1.8.6	The balance between theory and practice	4
	1.8.7	The research orientation of the programme	3
	1.8.8	The quality of students' assignments	5
1.9	**The expected learning outcomes of the programme are known to the students and to the members of the teaching staff.**		5
1.10	The teaching and learning process is adequate and effective for the achievement of the expected learning outcomes.		5
1.11	The content of the programme's courses reflects the latest achievements / developments in science, arts, research and technology.		5
1.12	New research results are embodied in the content of the programme of study.		5
1.13	The content of foundation courses is designed to prepare the students for the first year of their chosen undergraduate degree.		Choose mark
1.14	Students' command of the language of instruction is appropriate.		5
1.15	The programme of study is structured in a consistent manner and in sequence, so that concepts operating as preconditions precede the teaching of other, more complex and cognitively more demanding, concepts.		5
1.16	The learning outcomes and the content of the courses are consistent.		5
1.17	The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied and there is correspondence between credits, workload and expected learning outcomes per course and per semester.		5
1.18	The higher education qualification awarded to the students corresponds to the purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes of the programme.		5
1.19	The higher education qualification and the programme of study conform to the provisions for registration to their corresponding professional and vocational bodies for the purpose of exercising a particular profession.		Choose mark
1.20	The programme's management in regard to its design, its approval, its monitoring and its review, is in place.		5
1.21	The programme's collaborations with other institutions provide added value and are compared positively with corresponding collaborations of other departments		Choose mark

	/ programmes of study in Europe and internationally.	
1.22	Procedures are applied so that the programme conforms to the scientific and professional activities of the graduates.	Choose mark
1.23	**The admission requirements are appropriate.**	5
1.24	Sufficient information relating to the programme of study is posted publicly.	Choose mark
1.25	The teaching methodology is suitable for teaching in higher education.	5

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

1.8.7: The EEC notes the decision not to have a compulsory dissertation requirement might affect the research orientation of the MA Programme. However the EEC would like to highlight the fact the Programme is oriented towards a broader audience, providing the foundations for critical thinking in politics. 1.13 is clearly not applicable. 1.14. The MA Programme language is Greek, the audience is aimed to be students mainly from Greece and Cyprus, therefore the EEC assumes that students' command of language is appropriate, yet we recommend the MA Programme Academic Team to clarify to the applicants that a good command of English, given the literature is also required. 1.19 is clearly not applicable. 1.21 is not applicable, since it's a new MA Programme. 1.22 as well as 1.24 are clearly not applicable for a new MA Programme.

Provide information on:

1. **Employability records**

Not applicable. It's a new MA Programme

2. **Pass rate per course/semester**

Not applicable. It's a new MA Programme

3. **The correspondence of exams' and assignments' content to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS**

Not applicable. It's a new MA Programme

Please tick one of the following for:

Study programme and study programme's design and development

Non-Compliant ☐   *Partially Compliant* ☐   *Compliant* x

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development and respects their needs.*
- *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.*
- *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.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for and method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*

Findings
The teaching, learning and students' assessment procedures of the MA programme are fully in line with the distance learning methodology, applied by the OUC.

Strengths
The combination of assignments and written exams per module is a good practice in terms of student assessment. The distance learning methodology is applied in a very modern and sufficiently supported way.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
The EEC is not fully convinced that the MA Programme provides the students with the best opportunity to proceed in research activities, yet we are fully aware of the fact that the nature of

the Programme is a taught MA Programme with an optional thesis. It is mainly an MA Programme providing foundations for developing a critical thinking towards the context of actual politics.

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2:	Non-compliant
3:	Partially compliant
4 or 5:	Compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
2.1	The actual/expected number of students in each class allows for constructive teaching and communication.	5
2.2	The actual/expected number of students in each class compares positively to the current international standards and/or practices.	5
2.3	There is an adequate policy for regular and effective communication with students.	5
2.4	The methodology implemented in each course leads to the achievement of the course's purpose and objectives and those of the individual modules.	5
2.5	Constructive formative assessment for learning and feedback are regularly provided to the students.	5
2.6	The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate, and known to the students.	5
2.7	Educational activities which encourage students' active participation in the learning process are implemented.	5
2.8	Teaching incorporates the use of modern educational technologies that are consistent with international standards, including a platform for the electronic support of learning.	5
2.9	Teaching materials (books, manuals, journals, databases, and teaching notes) meet the requirements set by the methodology of the programme's individual courses and are updated regularly.	4
2.10	It is ensured that teaching and learning are continuously enriched by research.	4
2.11	The programme promotes students' research skills and inquiry learning.	4
2.12	Students are adequately trained in the research process.	3

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Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

As already stated the EEC is not fully convinced that the MA Programme provides the students with the best opportunity to proceed in research activities, yet we are fully aware of the fact that the nature of the Programme is a taught MA Programme with an optional thesis. It is mainly an MA Programme providing foundations for developing a critical thinking towards the context of actual politics.

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Please tick one of the following for:

Teaching, learning and student assessment

Non-Compliant	☐	*Partially Compliant*	☐	*Compliant*	*x*

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3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

Standards

- *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 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).*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Assessment of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*

Findings

The quality of the academic team in charge of the MA Programme is high, since they are all highly-skilled and qualified in the key areas of the MA Programme. Even the tutors to be recruited after an open call are expected to be PhD holders, given the regulations and the practice applied by the OUC.

Strengths
See above.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
The EEC makes a specific recommendation to the University to comply with the existing legislative framework on discrimination and gender equality, through a set of explicit policy statements. The EEC recommends the OUC to claim for more posts of full-time permanent academic staff in order to substantially support the operation and the diversified needs of the new MA Programme.

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant
- 3: Partially compliant
- 4 or 5: Compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
3.1	The number of full-time teaching staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, and their fields of expertise, adequately support the programme of study.	5
3.2	The members of teaching staff for each course have the relevant formal and fundamental qualifications for teaching the course, including the following:	
	3.2.1 Subject specialisation	5
	3.2.2 Research and Publications within the discipline	5
	3.2.3 Experience / training in teaching in higher education	5
3.3	The programme attracts visiting professors of recognized academic standing.	Choose mark
3.4	The specialisations of visiting professors adequately support the programme of study.	Choose mark
3.5	Special teaching staff and special scientists have the necessary qualifications, adequate work experience and specialisation to teach a limited number of courses in the programme of study.	Choose mark
3.6	In the programme of study, the ratio of the number of courses taught by full-time staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, to the number of courses taught by part-time staff, ensures the quality of the programme of study.	4
3.7	The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff supports and safeguards the programme's quality.	5
3.8	The teaching load allows for the conduct of research and contribution to society.	5

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3.9	The programme's coordinator has the qualifications and experience to coordinate the programme of study.	**5**
3.10	The results of the teaching staff's research activity are published in international journals with the peer-reviewing system, in international conferences, conference minutes, publications etc.	5
3.11	The teaching staff is provided with adequate training opportunities in teaching methods, adult education and new technologies.	5
3.12	Feedback processes for teaching staff in regard to the evaluation of their teaching work, by the students, are satisfactory.	5

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

We note that the number of the teaching staff occupied exclusively in the Institution (OUC) is adequate to support the programme of study. However we note that the Programme will be benefited from additional teaching staff, both full and part-time (permanent and tutors) to cover any aspect of the teaching programme. 3.3., 3.4., 3.5 are not applicable, since it's a new MA Programme.

Provide information on the following:

In every programme of study the special teaching staff should not exceed 30% of the permanent teaching staff.

It is stated in the application, yet the EEC has no relevant data, since the MA Programme is new and under approval

Please tick one of the following for:

Teaching Staff

Non-Compliant ☐   *Partially Compliant* ☐   *Compliant* x

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

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Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*
- *Information on students, like 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, is collected, monitored and analysed.*
- *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.*
- *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.*
- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students, as well as students with disabilities).*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Students are involved in evaluating the teaching staff.*
- *Students' mobility is encouraged and supported.*

</div>

Findings
This is a new MA Programme, under approval, so the information the EEC got, through the onsite visit, came from students from other OUC programmes. However, the admission procedures as well as all the other procedures related to students are in line with the relevant procedures followed by the OUC. That was clear in both the application and the onsite visit.

Strengths
The ways to activate students, the existing productive and fruitful relationship between the academic staff and the students, the constant contact as well as the fact that the MA Programme addresses a wide range of potential audiences are among the strengths.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
The EEC encourages the OUC to examine the possibility of providing resources- financing partially some of the students' association activities and initiatives.

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Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2:	Non-compliant
3:	Partially compliant
4 or 5:	Compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
4.1	The student admission requirements for the programme of study are based on specific regulations and suitable criteria that are favourably compared to international practices.	5
4.2	The award of the higher education qualification is accompanied by the diploma supplement which is in line with European and international standards.	5
4.3	The programme's evaluation mechanism, by the students, is effective.	5
4.4	Students' participation in exchange programmes is compared favourably to similar programmes across Europe.	Choose mark
4.5	**There is a student welfare service that supports students in regard to academic, personal problems and difficulties.**	5
4.6	Statutory mechanisms, for the support of students and the communication with the teaching staff, are effective.	5
4.7	Mentoring of each student is provided and the number of students per each permanent teaching member is adequate.	5
4.8	Flexible options / adaptable to the personal needs or to the needs of students with special needs, are provided.	5
4.9	Students are satisfied with their learning experiences.	5

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

4.4. is not applicable, since it's a new MA Programme, which doesn't operate yet.

Please circle one of the following for:

Students

Non-Compliant ☐   **Partially Compliant** ☐   **Compliant** x

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5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, financial, physical and human support resources*) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
  * Physical resources: premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, etc.
  Human support resources: tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff
- *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.*
- *Teaching staff is involved in the management of financial resources regarding the programme of study.*

Findings

From the documentation and the site visit we learned that the university has adequate and readily available resources that are required for a distance teaching university, considering that students are not working on campus but at various locations, like their home or work. Because the UOC is a distance teaching university, the resources for the delivery of teaching and learning are described in chapter 6 – additional for distance learning programs. So, the scores for the quality indictors could not be given because they are not existent in distance education or available in a complete different capacity. Most of these resources are digitally available and accessible in contrast to a regular university, i.e. instead of physical classrooms there are virtual classrooms. Also all information about the resources are available online. We discussed financial aids with the students, and they want to have better possibilities to spread their enrolment payments in time. We discussed the library facilities. They are limited, but students can access all the other, larger university libraries in Cyprus and Greece. The governance of the university, with a senate responsible for the academic affairs in which deans and representative teaching staff is involved, secures that the teaching staff is involved in decisions regarding programs and courses.

Strengths

All the necessary resources are available, maintained, promoted and accessible to staff and students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the quality and accessibility of the libraries in Cyprus and Greece we are wondering whether there is a need for the very limited library of the UOC itself. It could be advisable to search

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collaboration with a bigger university library to make the required online and physical journals, books and other resources available through them.

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2:	Non-compliant
3:	Partially compliant
4 or 5:	Compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
5.1	Adequate and modern learning resources are available to the students.	5
5.2	The library includes the latest books and material that support the programme.	3
5.3	The library loan system facilitates students' studies.	5
5.4	The laboratories adequately support the programme.	Choose mark
5.5	Student welfare services are of high quality.	5
5.6	Statutory administrative mechanisms for monitoring and supporting students are sufficient.	5
5.7	Suitable books and reputable journals support the programme of study.	5
5.8	An internal communication platform supports the programme of study.	5
5.9	The equipment used in teaching and learning (laboratory and electronic equipment, consumables etc.) are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate.	4
5.10	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are adequate and accessible to students.	5
5.11	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are updated regularly with the most recent publications.	5

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

5.2. The EEC recognizes that the OUC "physical" Library may not provide all the resources necessary to support the programme. However the EEC is satisfied that students have access to a range of materials from diverse sources to support the study programme. 5.4. is not applicable.

Please circle one of the following for:

Resources

| *Non-Compliant* | ☐ | *Partially Compliant* | ☐ | *Compliant* | ☒ |

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6. Additional for distance learning programmes

(ALL ESG)

<u>*Standards*</u>

- ***The distance learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study****.*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for distance learning, which is responsible for the support of the distance learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *Feedback processes for students in relation to written assignments are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to ensure student interactions with each other, with the teaching staff, and the study material.*
- *Teacher training programmes focusing on interaction and the specificities of distance learning are offered.*
- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on distance learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with distance learning methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
  - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *Presentation of course material, on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  - *Weekly outline of set activities and exercises and clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*

Findings

The OUC is a public university in Cyprus dedicated to open and distance education at the undergraduate and graduate level. It is a rather young open university (OU), established in 2002 and serving its first student cohorts in 2006-2007. With a state budget of 6 M euro the institution has found its way to provide open distance education to ˜4000 students with a limited permanent academic (25) and administrative (85) staff and about 250 temporary employed tutors.

In summary it is found that:

- The university has been successful in providing degrees through its distance learning system (around 6000 graduates up until now).
- The university works with modular courses in a semester system that can be studied within the context of a degree program or as a single course for lifelong learners.
- The university has a unified digital learning environment (eClass) that is composed of the different components that are required to deliver high quality distance education. Required is at the minimum components for the presentation of multimedia resources and the synchronous and asynchronous interaction between students and between students and teachers. The core component (Moodle) of eClass is open source. Additions like LAMS are new and not used yet. But the fact that there is a new component means that the learning environment is developing.
- Besides eClass other communication media like telephone, email and even face-to-face contact are used to communicate with students and tutors.
- Teachers are supported, through the OUC Educational Methodology & Educational Material Lab, to develop educational materials for their online courses and helps them to solve pedagogical design issues during course development.
- The university maintains its own data centre (with the required security and redundancy).
- The university puts effort in the selection and training of tutors that are able to teach at a distance, using the infrastructure of the OUC.
- For the final examinations (that are required to have a physical presence of the student, the OUC has exam centres in Cyprus, Greece and other places.

Strengths

- The university is able to deliver an impressive number of courses and programs with a limited number of permanent staff members and within a budget of 6 M state funding (12.4 M in total). Besides the delivery of education there are many other activities required to perform as a university, like research, (inter-)national collaborations, acquiring project funding, etc.
- The university is working on innovative solutions to enrich the digital learning environment through its recently established OUC Educational Methodology & Educational Material Lab.
- The university uses a single, well maintained digital learning environment that is used for all its online education.
- Students are very positive about the social interaction that is organized, partly by themselves. In this way they do not feel isolated, like in some other distance teaching institutions. Also the teaching staff is very approachable to help them.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Many OU's around the world provide flexible education that serves the needs of lifelong, adult learners with their specific needs, and as a consequence they struggle with the same issue, like student retention, costs and quality of the (rapidly changing) digital learning environment and the complexity of course development, student support and assessment. One of these

issues is also the pedagogical model that the university applies for all its education to secure effective online learning. During the visit we discussed this, and the staff recognized its importance, however there is not yet a systematic written model that is applied throughout its educational offering. We recommend developing and applying such a model that is grounded in educational research and evaluations to secure its effectiveness.

- During the presentations we have seen videos in Blackboard Collaborate that were of poor video and audio quality and with a length of 4 hours. There are three improvements to make based on this experience and later discussions:
1. Besides the training of tutors how to use these tools in optimal quality, this should also be controlled better, in advance, to prevent a waist of student and tutor time.
2. As discussed later with the administrative staff, they told us that presentations should not be made through blackboard collaborate but through the video platform to prevent these issues. They know this, but are not able to intervene because the tutors are 'free' to make these choices themselves. It would be advised to find a solution for this governance issue.
3. The duration of the online session is too long. Better would be to restrict sessions to 1 hour preferably and a maximum of 1.5 hour.

- We would strongly advise to create test procedures for courses and programs that are newly developed or revised before they go online for students and tutors. Online courses are increasingly complex in nature, not only technically (are all videos, tables, photos, etc. accessible on all computers and mobiles?), but also logically (can people find their way through the resources: where to begin? Where am I? How can I find…, etc.). Such a test should therefore be a team effort with different kinds of expertise involved.

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2:	Non-compliant
3:	Partially compliant
4 or 5:	Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 5
6.1	The pedagogical planning unit for distance learning supports the distance learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment.	4
6.2	The institution safeguards the interaction:	
	6.2.1 Among students	5
	6.2.2 Between students and teaching staff	5
	6.2.3 Between students and study guides/material of study	5
6.3	The process and the conditions for the recruitment of teaching staff ensure that candidates have the necessary skills and experience for distance learning	4

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	education.	
6.4	Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff through appropriate procedures.	5
6.5	Student performance monitoring mechanisms are satisfactory.	5
6.6	Adequate mentoring by the teaching staff is provided to students through established procedures.	4
6.7	The unimpeded distance learning communication between the teaching staff and the students is ensured.	4
6.8	Assessment consistency is ensured.	5
6.9	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) comply with the requirements provided by the distance learning education methodology and are updated regularly.	5
6.10	The programme of study has the appropriate and adequate infrastructure for the support of distance learning.	5
6.11	The supporting infrastructures are easily accessible.	5
6.12	Students are informed and trained with regards to the available educational infrastructure.	5
6.13	Procedures for systematic control and improvement of the supportive services are set.	5
6.14	Infrastructure for distance education is comparable to corresponding university infrastructure in the European Union and internationally.	5
6.15	Electronic library services are provided according to international practice in order to support the needs of the students and the teaching staff.	5
6.16	The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary electronic sources of information, relevant to the programme, the level, and the method of teaching.	5
6.17	Students' weekly assignments are appropriate for the level of the programme.	5

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6.18	Feedback on students' assignments is regular through concrete and published procedures.	**5**
6.19	The quality of students' final exams is ensured and evidenced.	5
6.20	The teaching e-learning material has been sufficiently enriched with electronic sources, updated research publications and other electronic learning resources that support students' work and learning.	5

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please tick one of the following for:

Additional for distance learning programmes

Non-Compliant ☐   *Partially Compliant* ☐   *Compliant* ☒

7. Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

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*
- *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 composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*
  - *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - *support for writing research papers*
  - *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

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.

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.

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2:	Non-compliant
3:	Partially compliant
4 or 5:	Compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	**1 - 5**
7.1	The provision of quality doctoral studies is ensured through doctoral studies regulations, which are publicly available.	Choose mark
7.2	The structure and the content of a doctoral programme of study ensure the quality provision of doctoral studies.	Choose mark
7.3	The doctoral studies' supervisors have the necessary academic qualifications and experience for the supervision of the specific dissertations.	Choose mark
7.4	The number of doctoral students, under the supervision of a member of the teaching staff, enables continuous and effective feedback to the students and it complies with the European and international standards.	Choose mark
7.5	The research interests of academic advisors and supervisors adequately cover the thematic areas of research conducted by the doctoral students of the programme.	Choose mark
7.6	Research equipment, laboratories, workshops and existing bibliographic material support the programme of study.	Choose mark

7.7	The quality of the doctoral theses of the programme in this field is in line with international standards.	Choose mark
7.8	Doctoral candidates have publications in scientific journals and/ or participate in international conferences.	Choose mark
7.9	The institution has mechanisms and funds to support writing and attending conferences of doctoral candidates.	Choose mark
7.10	The candidates demonstrate skills in designing and in conducting productive self-directed research.	Choose mark
7.11	Candidates are aware of the ethical implications of their research and of their responsibilities as scientists.	Choose mark
7.12	Suitable procedures of monitoring and periodic assessment of students' research progress are set.	Choose mark
7.13	There is a clear policy on authorship and intellectual property.	Choose mark

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please tick one of the following for:

Additional for doctoral programmes

Non-Compliant ☐   *Partially Compliant* ☐   *Compliant* ☐

8. Additional for joint programmes

(ALL ESG)

<u>*Standards*</u>

- *The joint programme is offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems.*
- *The partner universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes.*
- *The joint programme is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design, delivery and further development of the programme.*
- *The terms and conditions of the joint programme are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:*
    - *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
    - *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, including funding, sharing of costs and income, resources for mobility of staff and students*
    - *Admission and selection procedures for students*
    - *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
    - *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*
    - *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*
- *Aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated, including a joint syllabus, language policy, as well as an account of the intended added value of the programme.*
- *Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

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

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.

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2:	Non-compliant
3:	Partially compliant
4 or 5:	Compliant

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
8.1	The joint study programme promotes the fulfilment of the mission and achievement of the goals of the partner universities.	Choose mark
8.2	The joint study programme has been developed by all the partner universities, which are also involved in its further development.	Choose mark
8.3	The partner universities have defined the responsibility of the parties in the common agreement.	Choose mark
8.4	The joint study programme conforms to the requirements and directions of national and international legislation.	Choose mark
8.5	The joint study programme is based on the needs of the target group and of the labour market.	Choose mark
8.6	Students are provided with advisory and support systems concerning learning and teaching at the partner universities.	Choose mark
8.7	The cooperation contract sets out the procedure for resolving disputes concerning the execution of the joint study programme, which ensures the protection of the rights of students and teaching staff.	Choose mark

8.8	The partner universities have agreed on how to seek feedback from students regarding the organisation and process of their study.		Choose mark
8.9	The partner universities ensure the economic sustainability of the joint study programme.		Choose mark
8.10	The degree awarded is justified by:		
	8.10.1	The learning outcomes	Choose mark
	8.10.2	The collaboration between/among the institutions delivering the programme	Choose mark
8.11	The jointness of the programme development is effective.		Choose mark
8.12	The students' mobility between/among the collaborative institutions provide students with rewarding experiences that facilitate employability in Europe.		Choose mark

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please tick one of the following for:

Additional for joint programmes

Non-Compliant ☐   *Partially Compliant* ☐   *Compliant* ☐

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D. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC has agreed to support the application for this new MA Programme, entitled PNYX. Some of the concerns raised by the questionnaire stem from the fact that this is distance learning programme offered by the OUC. We are satisfied by the academic, teaching- learning, administrative, student welfare and IT resources of this MA Programme. Our partial recommendations are analyzed and justified in the chapters above. The MA Programme fully corresponds to the EQF relevant standards and level descriptors.

Click or tap here to enter tetx.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Nikolaos Papadakis	
Arndt Brendecke	
Jo Murkens	
Rob Koper	
Marios Xiaris	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 17 September 2019