

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 22/1/2020

Higher Education Institution's response

- **Higher education institution:**
Open University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study (Name, ECTS, duration, cycle)**
In Greek: Ψηφιακό Δράμα και Θέατρο στη Μελέτη του Αρχαίου Ελληνικού Πολιτισμού
In English: Digital Drama and Theatre in the Study of Ancient Greek Culture
3 Semesters, 90 ECTS, MA
- **Language of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status**
New programme: YES
Currently operating: No

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. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee’s (EEC’s) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI’s response must follow below the EEC’s comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.1.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

Findings

The proposed program will make a significant contribution to the academic profile of the Faculty and the University at large. Drawing on the existent resources in terms of staff, management and learning provisions the program develops a unique and innovative, interdisciplinary approach which will prove attractive to local and hopefully international students.

Strengths

- The EEC was impressed by the level of expertise exhibited by academic staff, learning support staff and administrative staff.
- The level of collegiality was outstanding.
- The program is highly innovative and pioneering in the ways it taps into recent developments in the Digital Humanities and applies them to the study of Theatre and the Ancient Greek World.
- The interdisciplinary approach is consistent with the aims and objectives of the program.
- Its focus on cultural events and activities raises the students' potential employability in the current field of cultural production.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The following are simply recommendations and points for consideration and not corrections or improvements:

- We feel the strengths of the program are not highlighted enough and could be further stressed in the overall structure. Both the interdisciplinarity and the digital aspect could be further integrated.
- The excellent Learning Support Facilities could be further utilized.
- It would be worth reconsidering the structure of the whole program in order to highlight the strengths. In particular, the digital component could be moved to the start of the program.
- The overall assessment could benefit from further integration of the digital and interdisciplinary aspects from the program.

OUC Response:

We do appreciate the fact that the External Evaluation Committee considers this programme to be unique, innovative and pioneering, and that it will contribute to the academic profile of the University at large.

Taking on the point made by the Committee that the programme could attract the interest of foreign students, please note that Open University of Cyprus will make all efforts so that so that, not only of Greek and Cypriot students, but also of students from other countries will attend the

programme with the gradual enhancement of its offering in the English language as well in the near future.

Based on the areas of improvement and recommendations suggested by the Committee:

- The interactive character, along with the digital dimension of the programme, has been reinforced with alterations and supplementations in all the Thematic Units, as this is analyzed and presented further below in Section 2. Teaching, Learning and Student Assessment.
- The exploitation of the potential offered through the University's e-learning platform and all its communication and learning tools will be of course maximized as for all the programmes of study offered by OUC. OUC's eLearning Platform eClass will be used for the self-assessment exercises that students will be asked to undertake, while Blackboard Collaborate is used for all e-lectures, which are also recorded for students' offline viewing.
- The Thematic Unit (i.e. module) "Modern Trends and Applications of Digital Technologies in Education" has changed semesters, and it will be offered during the 1st Semester (together with the module "Ancient Greek Civilization and Theatre (ΨΗΔ511)"). The module "Theatre in Education: Artistic Expression and Pedagogy", which was initially offered in the 1st semester, will now move to the 2nd Semester. In this way, students will acquire direct knowledge and experience of Theatre in Education right from the first semester of their studies.

Based on the aforementioned changes, the new structure of the programme is as follows:



| Structure of the Programme | | | | | | | |
|---|--|----------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Digital Drama and Theater in the Study of Ancient Greek Culture | | | | | | | |
| | Thematic Units (Modules) | Semester | Mandatory / Elective | Pre-requisite Modules | Co-Requisite Modules | Workload | |
| | | | | | | Hours | ECTS |
| ΨΗΔ511 | Ancient Greek Civilization and Theatre (Αρχαίος Ελληνικός Πολιτισμός και Θέατρο) | 1 | Mandatory | | | 375 - 450 | 15 |
| ΨΗΔ512 | Modern Trends and Applications of Digital Technologies in Education (Σύγχρονες τάσεις και εφαρμογές των Ψηφιακών Τεχνολογιών στην Εκπαίδευση) | 1 | Mandatory | ΨΗΔ511 | | 375 - 450 | 15 |
| ΨΗΔ521 | Theatre in Education: Artistic Expression and Pedagogy (Θέατρο στην Εκπαίδευση: Καλλιτεχνική έκφραση και Παιδαγωγία) | 2 | Mandatory | ΨΗΔ511 | | 375 - 450 | 15 |
| ΨΗΔ701A | Master Thesis I (Μεταπτυχιακή Διατριβή I) | 2 | Mandatory | ΨΗΔ511 | ΨΗΔ521 | 375 - 450 | 15 |
| ΨΗΔ611 | Digital Drama and Theatre in Education (Ψηφιακό δράμα και θέατρο στην εκπαίδευση) | 3 | Mandatory | ΨΗΔ511 | | 375 - 450 | 15 |
| ΨΗΔ701B | Master Thesis II (Μεταπτυχιακή Διατριβή II) | 3 | Mandatory | | ΨΗΔ701A | 375 - 450 | 15 |
| Total | | | | | | 2250 - 2700 | 90 |

- The multidisciplinary and digital character of the programme runs horizontally, parallel to all the Thematic Units (modules), whose elements of multidisciplinary and digital function are reinforced with ways that are going to be analyzed further below in Section 2. Teaching, Learning and Student Assessment.
- The recommendation made by the Committee that “the overall students assessment could benefit from further integration of the digital and interdisciplinary aspects of the programme is again explained in Section 2. Teaching, learning and student assessment that follows.

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

Findings

- The university provides facilities and infrastructure that function well in the support of the program.
- The university requires the faculty to be literate in digital teaching and provides a virtual 12-week course titled “Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Distance Education”.
- According to the institution’s quality standards and indicators, courses include general forum discussions to enhance learning and promote interactivity, exchange of ideas, discussions and active class participation both on a faculty-student and student-to-student level. The institution policy for lecturers requires them to be responsible for updating the material. At the start of each semester, lecturers are required to submit/resubmit the course materials which are available online.
- The expertise of both the academic and support staff is well employed on the program.

Strengths

- We were impressed by the expertise and research activities of the academic staff.
- The learning support unit provides a fine example of best practice.
- Staff-student communication is outstanding with students explicitly expressing their appreciation of staff participation in extra-curricular activities, which seemed integral to their learning experience. The individual feedback provided in terms of quality and quantity is impressive.
- The program is designed according to the international standards of teaching and learning regarding pedagogical methods, modes of delivery and variety of learning outcomes, while highlighting the innovative aspects of the digital technologies involved.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The different course components could be further integrated. The digital component could be introduced in the first semester, providing one of the conceptual and methodological principles of the whole program.
- The survey aspects of the two main thematic units, “Ancient Greek Culture and Theatre” and “Theatre in Education: Artistic Expression and Pedagogy”, could be less prominent for

the benefit of further integration between them. The interface between the two courses could be further explored by sharing common themes, approaches and topics.

- We encourage the staff to reconsider the number and the type of the assessments. The nature of the program which draws heavily on digital approaches and interdisciplinarity is not adequately reflected in the examples of assessments presented. The EEC believes that a higher and more varied number of assessments would be more appropriate for a distance learning program such as this. In particular, we feel that the sit-down exams and the percentage of credits allocated to them should be reconsidered in order to do justice to both the level of commitment of the teachers and the learning outcomes of students.

OUC Response:

We do appreciate the fact that the Committee considers the expertise & research activities of the academic staff to be of high quality, and indeed Open University of Cyprus seeks to attract high caliber academics to teach its programmes of study. Given that OUC is a distance teaching university, faculty members and module coordinators are also asked to undertake a course on “Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Distance Education”, and training and support is provided to all newly-appointed adjunct faculty members to be able to effectively use and utilize the full potential of the OUC eLearning Platform “eClass”. Using eClass and all the synchronous and asynchronous communication tools it provides, we ensure high standard of staff-student interaction and communication.

Based on the areas of improvement and recommendations suggested by the Committee:

- As it is mentioned in the previous section, the module “Modern Trends and Applications of Digital Technologies in Education” is now transferred to the 1st semester of the programme. Thus, the digital component is now introduced in the first semester.
- The modules “Ancient Greek Culture and Theatre” and “Theatre in Education: Artistic Expression and Pedagogy” have been enhanced with many new elements (as requested by the Committee), and these are evident in the modules’ Study Guides. Based on the changes implemented, there is now a clearer correspondence between subjects, notions and texts, which should be dealt from a historic, literary, cultural and simultaneously teatrological/aesthetic/pedagogical point of view. This is also accomplished with the introduction, teaching and exploitation of various texts of the Ancient Greek Literature, such as Literature (Homer’s “Odyssey”), History (Thucydides’ “Pericles’ Funeral Oration”), Tragedy (Euripides’ “Helen, Medea, Antigone”), Comedy (Aristophanes’ “The Clouds”, “The Birds”), as well as the multiplication and the enhancement of the self-evaluation exercises and the application activities.
- We also took into consideration the recommendation made by the External Evaluators’ Committee concerning the assessments of students. Indeed, to ensure that the digital approaches of the programme are reinforced, the type, the kind and the number of the

assignments has changed. In the originally prepared Study Guides all of modules we had incorporated two lengthy assignments of 4000 words each, which corresponded. The subject of the assignments was strictly connected with the subject it was included.

In the revised programme, there is only one lengthy assignment of 4000 words and another consisting of three separate parts/questions that students need to develop, each in 1000 words long (in total 3000 words). Additionally, special care is given so that the assignments in all Thematic Units are directly related with the Ancient Greek Culture, which they approach from a different point of view (historical, literary, teatrological, pedagogical, digital). In this way, multidisciplinary is secured and runs through all the modules. The same is accomplished with new self-assessment activities added to the already existing ones, thus reinforcing and encouraging the students to be practically involved in the digital procedure and therefore covering all the aspects of the Ancient Greek Culture. All these changes are made to all the modules' Study Guides. The one (1) lengthy assignments counts for 20% of the total grade of all assignments submitted by students, while the other with the three (3) shorter parts/questions of 1000 words each (in total 3000 words) count for 20% of the total grade of all assignments.

Similar subjects for assignments, activities and exercises initiating from texts of the Ancient Greek Literature (Odyssey, Tragedy, Comedy) are simultaneously given in three out of the four Thematic Units ("Ancient Greek Civilization and Theatre", "Theatre in Education: Artistic expression and Pedagogy", "Digital Drama and Theatre in Education") and are approached by corresponding viewpoints and parameters. In the fourth module however ("Modern Trends and Applications of Digital Technologies in Education"), some activities are added, which are directly related to the application of theoretical knowledge and require the application of theoretical knowledge in issues originating from the study of the Ancient Greek Culture.

All the above, secure the multidisciplinary approach of the overall issue, always within the frame of the use and exploitation of the potential offered by the modern technology and especially Digital Drama. Lastly, please note that based on the Internal Study Regulations of Open University of Cyprus all programmes need to incorporate a final written examination that corresponds to at least 50% of the total grade of each module. Thus, for this particular programme, the final exam counts for 60% of the total grade, and the two marked assignments count for 40% (20%+20%) of the total grade.

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

In addition to your response to EEA's comments on the teaching staff:

- a. fill in TABLE 1: TEACHING STAFF at the end of this form and
- b. send the curriculum vitae of all the program lecturers on the forms posted on the Agency's website as an annex. (Form 500.1.03 for Universities and Form 500.1.04 for Higher Education Institutes)

Findings

- The EEC was impressed by the expertise and the level of commitment of all staff involved.
- Teaching draws on the research of the scholars involved and teaching performance is evaluated each semester by a successful system of assessment in which students, tutors and coordinators may express their opinion.
- The teaching team has a diverse profile, including all genders and junior and senior faculty.

Strengths

- The internal evaluation system is a fine example of good practice.
- The composition of the team seemed well thought out, drawing on their distinct qualifications in order to create the overall interdisciplinary approach. Furthermore, the communication channels between academic staff, support staff and administrative staff seemed to work smoothly.
- The research profile of all staff involved is impressive on a national and international level.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- It would be helpful for the smooth functioning of the program and for its academic coherence for all staff to familiarize themselves further with the content and teaching methodologies of each other's courses. The university offers a virtual 12-week course titled "Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Distance Education", which may be conducive in this context.

OUC Response:

We do appreciate the fact that the Committee considers the expertise & research activities of the academic staff to be of high quality, and indeed Open University of Cyprus seeks to attract high caliber academics to teach its programmes of study. Given that OUC is a distance teaching university, faculty members and module coordinators are also asked to undertake a course on "Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Distance Education", and training and support is provided to all newly-appointed adjunct faculty members to be able to effectively use and utilize the full potential of the OUC eLearning Platform "eClass". Thus, please rest assured that The members of the teaching staff will participate in the 12-week training seminar of the OUC, under the title "Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Distant Education". Additionally, they will also develop personal contacts and co-operations, in order to reinforce the homogeneity of the methodology in the teaching and the assessment of their students. Lastly, the programme's Academic Coordinator will make sure that all staff members are well aware and can effectively use the eLearning Platform of the OUC, as well as keep consistency in terms of teaching methods and

assessment methods. All appointed adjunct faculty will of course familiarize themselves with the content of the module they will be asked to teach, and please take into consideration that the majority of the Academic Team members that have designed the programme and which are willing to teach, are already faculty or adjunct faculty of the OUC, thus have experience in its teaching methods and tools.

4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Findings

- As a new program, the EEC assessment is based on an interview with four current students from other programs. They all were elected representatives of the Students Association.

Strengths

- The students were engaged and their comments extremely helpful. Each was very enthusiastic about the potential of this program under review, even expressing the desire to enrol in such a course were it available.
- The University provides high level of support and services to students and student welfare. The University also has
- structures in place to support people with special needs or disabilities.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- It would be recommendable that the students have the opportunity to provide feedback to the University and to participate in the internal evaluation procedures.

OUC Response:

We do appreciate the fact that the External Evaluators' Committee thinks highly of the support and services Open University of Cyprus offers its students. Please also note that OUC has in place structures to support people with special needs or disabilities, while recently our University has also appointed on a contractual basis a Psychologist to provide support to students in need.

With regards to the Committee's recommendation to provide our students the opportunity to provide feedback to the University and to participate in the internal evaluation procedures, please note the following: As already mentioned in the application form, students provide feedback on the modules they attend to at the end of each semester/academic year. This anonymous feedback is taken into consideration by the University in general, as well as each programme's Academic Coordinator and module coordinators. Moreover, one student is member of each Faculty's Internal Quality Assurance Committee. Lastly, given that the Law governing the operation of the Open University of Cyprus does not for the time being allow the establishment of a Students Association, the OUC takes any measures necessary to ensure that students opinions are heard by the University's governing bodies.

5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

Findings

The EEC generally believes that the environments provided by the University are adequate to support learning and to support the design and implementation of teaching. The virtual classrooms are well dimensioned and sized, the technological infrastructure is good, the Library Information System provides a reasonable amount of resources, and also have appropriate tools that support teaching and learning, including eClass, Blackboard Collaborate, Laya, etc.

Strengths

See above. In addition, the Laboratory of Educational Material and Methodology provides pedagogical support for designing and implementing learning materials for digital environments. The lab also provides support in the interpretation of learning analytics.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The program could take better advantage of existing resources such as the support of the Laboratory of Educational Material and Methodology.

The learning materials shown during the meeting are a fine example of good practice. However, the systematic use of subtitles in the videos is recommended.

OUC Response:

We do appreciate the fact that the External Evaluators' Committee thinks highly of the eLearning resources and the eLearning Platform utilized by the Open University of Cyprus. Please note that the University has set up a Laboratory of Educational Material and Methodology exactly to provide pedagogical support for designing and implementing learning materials for digital environments. This know-how and expertise will be fully exploited for the purposes of this newly-established programme of study. The Committee suggests that the systematic use of subtitles in the videos is recommended, however, please note that the Programme will be offered in the Greek language, for Greek-speaking students, thus for the time being subtitling is not needed.

6. Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)

1. Assessment of the interaction (among students, between students and teaching staff, between students and study guides/material of study)

Interaction between students and teaching staff is exemplary. The communication channels are reciprocal and students feel confident when approaching staff. From the conversations taken place, staff commitment to students sometimes goes beyond the classroom and extends to educational and cultural activities that relate to the course.

Interactions between students, study guides and material are facilitated by the eClass virtual learning environment.

It seems that interactions among students are conducted through the Student Association.

2. Student-centered teaching and learning

The teaching methodology and digital environments use support and encourage student-centered learning.

3. Training, guidance and support provided to the teaching staff

As mentioned, the University provides teachers with the opportunity to train in digital learning in the same environment they will use for teaching (eClass). Therefore, the teachers may learn the theory as well as practice in a digital environment.

Findings

- The nature of the program is compatible with the distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate.
- The University has a unit responsible for providing pedagogical support for designing and creating learning materials for digital environments.
- The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a weekly study guide that includes the course objectives, learning outcomes, materials, activities, discussions and complementary bibliographic references. Each course provides also opportunities to meet synchronously with teachers.
- During the courses, individual feedback is provided by teachers for each assessment activity.

Strengths

- The Laboratory of Educational Material and Methodology is considered good practice.
- The weekly study guides used in the courses are a fine practice in the context of distance learning.
- The policies regarding communication between teachers and students and the time limit before responding are an example of good practice.
- The courses in this program (and across all programs of OUC) are offered individually. This could be considered good practice that promotes lifelong learning.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The nature of the program requires joint learning activities. The EEC recommends the appropriate use of digital tools and methodologies to foster collaborative activities relevant to the themes and approaches of the course.
- The University has exhibited considerable progress in the use of learning analytics. As there have been further developments in this field, the EEC suggests that the University, at an institutional level, takes advantage of these in order to facilitate teaching activities.

OUC Response:

We do appreciate the fact that the Committee considers “interaction between students and teaching staff as exemplary”. Open University of Cyprus is indeed committed to provide high-quality academic and administrative support to all its students throughout their studies despite of its distance learning nature/methodology.

The OUC eLearning Platform is a state-of-the-art learning tool and it provides a comprehensive virtual learning environment: learning materials are provided in digital form, students use eClass to submit their assignments and receive their grades and detailed feedback, as well as use eClass to undertake their self-assessment exercises, and eClass is used for all e-lectures, which are recorded for offline viewing. Moreover, eClass provides both synchronous and asynchronous communication tools that students and staff use to communicate and interact. Teaching staff also have office hours and communicate with students via other tools, such as skype, email, etc. All these methods and tools encourage student-centered learning.

The interdisciplinary and digital character is ensured by the assignments and the individual activities of the courses. These have in common the Ancient Greek Culture and (most often) are implemented using digital media who thus make their presence in all aspects of the program. (digital story-telling, digital animation, role playing etc.).

7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Not applicable, as this evaluation is for a Master's degree programme.

8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

Not applicable, as this evaluation is not for a joint programme.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The panel is grateful for the opportunity provided to engage with such an innovative and pioneering proposal. We enjoyed the discussions, the hospitality and learned much during the process. Our comments were all received with generosity and open-mindedness.

We are impressed by the originality of the program that brought together a number of disciplines and approaches through the lens of Digital Humanities. We are confident that this course will make a very valuable contribution to this newly developing field. In turn, this will increase the employability of the students, the research profile and development of all staff involved and enhance the international reputation of the Open University of Cyprus. In this context may be worth considering running the program also in English.

We are happy to endorse this program and to recommend its implementation.

OUC Response:

In closing, Open University of Cyprus and the Academic Team of the MA Programme “Digital Drama and Theatre in the Study of the Ancient Greek Culture” would like to sincerely thank the External Evaluation Committee for the very positive reception of the general philosophy, the aims and intentions of this new programme that the OUC has designed and expects to offer as of the next academic year. The remarks, suggestions and recommendations of the Committee were very constructive and thoughtful, significantly supporting our efforts to shape the new programme in the best possible way. As evident from the information provided beforehand, in all sections, the programme’s Academic Team took all recommendations into consideration and made changes deemed necessary to safeguard the high quality and pioneer character of this interdisciplinary programme.

More specifically, the multidisciplinary and digital character of the programme has been considerably reinforced, with interventions regarding the revision of some of the Study Guides (e.g. Module “ΨΗΔ511- Ancient Greek Civilization and Theatre”) and the enhancement of others with elements that reinforce and enhance the multidisciplinary and holistic approach of the Ancient Greek Culture through:

- The study of sources and texts.
- Including short assignments of compositional and multidisciplinary and digital content.
- A wealth of application proposals and activities, which enable students to absorb knowledge and put it to practice.
- Specified and general bibliography.






As far as the recommendation of the EEC concerning the provision of the programme in English is concerned, please note that Open University of Cyprus will take this into consideration after the

first period of the offering of the programme. Depending on students' demand and market research, our University will consider the offering of the programme in English as well.

To sum up, we strongly believe that the proposals of the Committee were taken into consideration and we submit the revised new post-graduate programme "Digital Drama and Theatre in the Study of Ancient Greek Culture" to the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education to be approved. We look forward to a positive decision by CYQAA regarding the accreditation of the programme, as per the recommendation of the EEC.

[The Study Guides and the application form of the revised programme are also submitted with track changes of key changes/interventions]

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Position</i> | <i>Signature</i> |
|---|--|---|
| Professor Sokratis Katsikas | Rector |  |
| Professor Yannis Manolopoulos | Vice-Rector, Chair of the University's Quality Assurance Committee |  |
| Associate Professor Antonis Petrides | Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences |  |
| Professor Theodoros Grammatas | Academic Coordinator of the newly-established MA "Digital Drama and Theatre in the Study of Ancient Greek Culture" |  |
| Erato Ioanna Sarri | Coordinator of the University's Quality Assurance Office |  |

Date: 22/01/2020

