



Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 10/05/2022

Higher Education Institution's Response

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

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών «Ελληνική Γλώσσα
και Λογοτεχνία»

In English:

Magister Artium "Greek Linguistics and Literature"

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):** 2 proposed

In Greek: Concentrations

1. Εφαρμοσμένη-Εκπαιδευτική Γλωσσολογία
2. Λογοτεχνικοί Γραμματισμοί

In English:

1. Applied-Educational Linguistics Concentrations
2. Literary Literacies



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].



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 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) 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 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 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*
- *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, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

The assessors' comments are as follows:

"The members of the External Evaluation Committee were given a warm welcome by the leadership of the OUC, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and all the teaching and administrative personnel of the MA Programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature. All of these parties have been very supportive of our work as evaluators and have provided detailed information on and access to all relevant materials. More specifically, the following items stood out:□

** The MA programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature has designed a comprehensive curriculum with a very clear structure and has procedures in place to adequately review contents and methods each year. The learning outcomes, too, are regularly reviewed. Bibliographies are kept up-to-date as are criteria and methods of assessment.□*

** As part of its ongoing self-evaluation, the programme staff has proposed modifications to the curriculum, switching from a 2-year-long 120 ECTS programme to a 1.5-year-long 90 ECTS (i.e. semester-based) programme. This revision must make the programme more versatile and also more financially attractive to its student body. It will also make the programme more compatible with part-time study, which is a necessity for many students who work full-time or part-time jobs.□*

** In light of the above, the introduction of the new thematic unit 'Research Methods for Language and Text' (which includes exposure to the Digital Humanities) is an exciting development as well.*

** The quality of teaching is ensured through student evaluations collected at the end of each semester for every thematic unit by the Quality Assurance Committee. Procedures guarantee the regular internal appraisal of the curriculum and the more comprehensive three-year reviews of the teaching staff.□*

** The appointment procedures of the associate faculty members and adjuncts/tutors are very clear. Great care is taken to select the best-qualified applicants, all Ph.D. holders with English-language fluency, with extensive research and publication records in their area of specialization and ample experience in teaching in a distance learning programme. For many tutors, their position in this MA programme has been a springboard to a more permanent academic position elsewhere.□*

** The members of the academic staff, both permanent and adjunct staff, take a vested interest in the MA programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature, which started in academic year 2011/2012 and which was recently revised to better fit the needs of its student audiences.□*

** The programme has its own dedicated website, and the technical and other staff members take great care to update it regularly. The website contains a description of the programme (history, objectives, outcomes). It specifies criteria for student admission, ECTS requirements, and it contains a list of available course offerings.□*

** The programme takes every step to assist students with learning disabilities or special needs (including vision- or hearing-impaired students).*

** The programme's guidelines for quality assurance are clear and have been taken to heart by its teaching staff. The material provided in the context of this evaluation covered all the areas required. Additionally, the CYQAA provides clear guidance for quality assurance procedures and the results are published on the CYQAA website.*

Strengths

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

** The MA programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature is a highly commendable example of a well-designed and well-functioning distance learning programme. It is particularly user-friendly for working students and students with responsibilities as caregivers. The programme is a great asset in OUC's pursuit to become an internationally attractive university, given that it already attracts many students from Greece. The language of instruction is Greek, commensurate with the contents of the thematic units. But the choice of Greek as the (necessary) language of instruction excludes foreign students whose Greek may not be adequate.*

** The e-Class and e-Learning Platforms are constantly kept up-to-date, so as to remain user-friendly for both the teaching personnel and the students.*

** The programme is regularly reviewed. The proposed and major revision of the programme is the subject of our current evaluation.*

** Information about performance indicators is systematically gathered and analysed.*

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 proposed second track of Literature and Literature Literacy could be strengthened by adding a second permanent faculty member who will also serve in the role of academic coordinator of this particular track—in parallel with the first track in Linguistics, where Associate Professor Stavroula Tsiplakou serves in the role of academic coordinator. Such an initiative will need the support of the upper levels of the OUC's administration and will require an allocation of financial resources as well."*

OUC Response

The Programme was characterised as compliant in all sub-areas, i.e. 1.1 Policy for quality assurance, 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review, 1.3 Public information Compliant and 1.4 Information management.

We will keep maintaining and expanding on the Programme's strengths, as noted by the assessors, namely: an up-to date, comprehensive curriculum; regular reviews of contents, methods and learning outcomes, criteria and methods of assessment; highly qualified and committed teaching staff, appointed on the basis of clear and robust procedures; effective communication with prospective students; care for students with learning disabilities or special



needs; clear quality assurance procedures; updating of the e-Class and e-Learning Platforms; regular reviewing of the programme on the basis of performance indicators.

In terms of the areas of further improvement and recommendations, the Programme fully acknowledges the assessors' comments and suggestions.

The comment that “[t]he language of instruction is Greek, commensurate with the contents of the thematic units. But the choice of Greek as the (necessary) language of instruction excludes foreign students whose Greek may not be adequate” points to the need for a similar English-language programme, which can be included in the University’s strategic planning.

We are grateful to the assessors for pointing out the need for a second Faculty member with an area of specialisation that is broad enough but relevant to the proposed second track of Literature and Literary Literacies. It is hoped that the OUC administration will support this recommendation.

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

The assessors' comments are as follows:

“The programme covers an appropriate range of core subject matter, covering a mix of theoretical and empirical studies, and dissertation projects span an impressive range of topics.

A challenge of the programme is that students come from a wide range of backgrounds, and they have to be brought up to speed rapidly in a range of theoretical and practical topics. However, the teaching staff are clearly aware of these challenges and the course materials are designed to provide refresher/intro-level materials as appropriate, while being mindful that most students are also engaged in full-time work. Staff are also responsive to student interest/demand, which has led to the introduction of a new course (Literary Literacies) featuring an education dimension.

The main practical component is in research methods. A single research methods course introduces both qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as text analysis, which is challenging in the time available; for instance, the approach to statistics is largely limited to descriptive statistics. However, the range of dissertation topics suggests that this preparation is sufficient for students to undertake original research in e.g. quantitative sociolinguistics if they so wish, although this presumably requires substantial support from dissertation project supervisors.

A range of assessments are used, including standard written essays, final exams, and also regular (up to weekly) group-based activities. Most of the information with which we were provided focused on these weekly activities, which are a new requirement. The ideas showcased for the activities are quite inventive and will likely lead to good student engagement. However, many of these seem to be very substantial pieces of work requiring substantial student time to complete and substantial staff time to support/mark. We would therefore encourage the course leaders to consider whether these activities could be made less demanding. One way to retain some of the exciting but more weighty activities would be to move them from the list of activities to the written assessment category.

The processes for assessing student work and monitoring consistency of marking across tutors are appropriate, with several levels of oversight in addition to marking rubrics and introductory training materials for markers. Final exams were previously conducted in assessment centres but have moved online during the covid era, which is convenient for students and meets the approval of staff. This practice could be continued post-pandemic.

The initial report we received highlighted a problem with pastoral care for students, arising from a staffing gap in the central university administration. We were pleased to hear that this issue has since been resolved, and the level of pastoral support is good.

The arrangements for e-learning are appropriate, allowing both asynchronous individual study and opportunities for live engagement with teaching staff and other tutors. Some of the assessment activities make extensive use of discussion boards to facilitate discussion among students.

Strengths

- Dedicated and engaged teaching staff who are clearly committed to and respected by their students.

- *Courses well-designed for students who are new to the topic or in need of a refresher, while still providing good broad coverage.*
- *Imaginative and ideas for assessed activities which are likely to result in good student engagement*
- *Strong sense of community and identification with the programme among students we interviewed, even after graduation.*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- *We strongly recommend that module leaders are mindful of the burden on students and (particularly) adjunct faculty arising from the weekly assessment activities. These activities may need to be made less demanding.*
- *Use of online final exams (rather than in-person exams in assessment centres) should be considered post-covid if supported by the faculty and by the professional and regulatory bodies.*
- *Thought should be given to whether students in certain specialisations might require additional support on the basics of inferential statistics, to allow them to interpret the literature in e.g. quantitative areas of linguistics.”*

OUC Response

The programme was characterised as ‘compliant’ in all sub-areas, i.e. 2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology, 2.2 Practical training, 2.3 Student assessment, and 2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities.

We will keep maintaining and expanding on the Programme’s strengths, as noted by the assessors, namely: an appropriate range of core subject matter; a balance of theoretical and empirical studies; appropriately designed course materials including refresher/intro-level materials which may be required for a number of students; responsiveness to student interest/demand; flexibility to address the needs of working students; a broad range of assessments; satisfactory arrangements for e-learning; imaginative ideas for assessment; staff excellence and commitment.

In terms of the areas of improvement and recommendations, the Programme fully acknowledges the assessors’ comments and suggestions and has already initiated and taken the following steps:

As regards weekly interactive activities, we will certainly be mindful of the workload involved; it needs to be clarified that the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education introduced the requirement for such activities **after** the application was submitted in early 2020; during the assessment meeting we only presented some sample interactive weekly activities, in order to provide an indication of where we would be heading with these. We will certainly make sure that the activities are less time-consuming and/or treated as written assignments.



Our experience confirms online final exams (rather than in-person exams in assessment centres) are an excellent practice and we hope that the administration as well as the relevant professional and regulatory bodies will consider its continuation post-covid.

We will introduce the basics of inferential statistics to the Research Methods Module, as we fully agree that these are necessary for students wanting to do quantitative research in, e.g., sociolinguistics (so far they have been trained individually as required for the purposes of research for their dissertation); the module will be restructured accordingly, in order to maintain a reasonable workload.

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

The assessors' comments are as follows:

"The programme depends on a single permanent faculty member whose expertise is in linguistics, with the majority of the teaching activities carried out by adjunct faculty (who are typically early career and/or have another academic appointment). The faculty involved in the programme are appropriately qualified, and indeed many of them have impressive CVs, which show active research programmes as well as expertise in teaching.

Procedures for recruiting adjunct faculty are well established, and adjuncts are appointed for several years and often re-appointed, which allows them to build up experience and expertise in their role. There is appropriate training and oversight of adjuncts, and adjunct faculty spoke highly of the technical support provided to familiarize them with the various systems involved in teaching. We were also heartened to hear that adjunct faculty had had success in obtaining permanent full-time posts at other universities, which might indicate that serving as adjunct faculty here provides a boost to their careers.

However, we did have several concerns in this area - not about the quality of the staff, but about the support provided by the university to those staff members. The programme has a single faculty member with an expertise in linguistics. Given the broad coverage of the programme, adding a second permanent faculty member with expertise in Greek literature seems essential. We understand that adjunct faculty have recently faced a worsening of their remuneration. However, since the quality of the programme and therefore of the student experience crucially depends on the efforts of these adjuncts, all efforts must be made to improve their pay and conditions. We are also concerned that the Open University provides relatively little support for research and public outreach activities by adjunct faculty, and we encourage the administration to do what they can to support those activities. Such support could include funding for research or paid time for research or outreach activities. This will ensure that the Open University avoids merely being parasitic on research funded by other universities or on the adjunct faculty's own time. It is in the Open University's best interest to bolster the research credentials of its faculty. In general, adjunct faculty emphasised the value of their position for enhancing their CVs, rather than the remuneration. While it is good that they felt teaching at the OUC enhanced their CVs, it is important that the university avoids exploiting that fact and also provides appropriate pay for what is excellent and time-consuming work.

Finally, student evaluations play an important role in the assessment of adjunct faculty. While some role for student feedback is of course important, we ask that those acting on those student evaluations bear in mind the well-known biases in student evaluations based on certain traits of the individual being evaluated (gender, ethnicity, and so on).

Strengths

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

- Permanent and adjunct faculty are appropriately and indeed impressively qualified.*
- Procedures for appointing and retaining adjunct faculty ensure that faculty members have the opportunity to build expertise in their role.*



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.

- To address the imbalance in permanent faculty: a permanent faculty member should be recruited in Greek literature*
- To increase pay for adjunct faculty, which should be a priority*
- To provide additional support for research and public engagement activities by faculty, with □ adjunct faculty being consulted on what would be most useful in this area.”*

OUC Response

The programme was characterised as compliant in all sub-areas (3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development, 3.2 Teaching staff number and status, 3.3 Synergies of teaching and research).

We will keep maintaining and expanding on these strengths, i.e. the (re)hiring of highly qualified and motivated adjunct tutors who are also very active researchers. We are very grateful for the acknowledgement of the staff's hard work and level of commitment to the Programme.

In terms of the areas of improvement and recommendations, the Programme acknowledges and fully agrees with all of the assessors' comments and suggestions. We are grateful to the assessors for pointing out the need for a second Faculty member with an area of specialisation relevant to the proposed second track of Literature and Literary Literacies. It is hoped that the OUC administration will support this recommendation. We fully agree that to increase payment for adjunct faculty should be a top priority, as well as additional support for research and public engagement activities, and it is hoped that the OUC administration will support this recommendation as well.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

The assessors' comments are as follows:

“The MA in Greek Linguistics and Literature (MAGLL) carries out appropriate processes of admission consistently and in a transparent manner according to the regulations of the Open University of Cyprus (OUC) and to the standards of the European University System. Prospective students receive full information about the study programme and the organisation of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS), where the programme belongs, through the relevant websites (of SHSS and of MAGLL <https://www.ouc.ac.cy/index.php/el/the-university-4/faculties/sake> and <https://www.ouc.ac.cy/index.php/el/studies/programmes/master/master-egl>). Useful information about the programme is also given in specially organised online events.

Admission requirements are set in accordance with international standards. They include a recognised first degree (BA or equivalent) from an accredited university-level institution anywhere in the world without specifying one or more subjects of the applicants' degree. Most students admitted hold first degrees in areas related to the subjects covered in the MAGLL, that is in Linguistics, Literature, Education Sciences, but also in Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, etc. Individuals who have not yet been officially awarded their first degrees at the time of submitting their application are offered admission on the condition that they hold their degree before embarking on their study at the OUC.

Even though the MAGLL is taught exclusively in Greek, students are expected to have a “very good command” of English in order to be able to have access to the relevant bibliographical resources of the disciplines studied. However, this requirement is not specified in terms of the CEFR levels. Given that the MAGLL is a programme offered exclusively online, students are expected to have adequate computer skills in order to be able to participate in all aspects and functions of the virtual educational environment.

The MAGLL programme attracts students of different aspirations and backgrounds, mainly in the field of public and private education, and it offers them opportunities to broaden their personal and professional horizons.

Enrollment in the MAGLL programme from the first year of its operation in 2011 to 2018-2019 showed a fluctuation ranging from a maximum of 76 students in 2011-2012 to a minimum of 14 students in 2018-2019. Efforts should be made to enhance the enrollment rates of the programme, to safeguard its sustainability, given that it offers an attractive study scheme and that it is a programme of high academic quality in terms of organization, content, and operation as well as in terms of human resources. To achieve this goal, OUC/SHSS/MAGLL officials should conduct a thorough study of the competition among similar Master's programmes offered by university-level institutions in Cyprus and Greece, focusing on the content of the programmes, the audiences targeted, and the tuition fees policies.

Student progression is subject to OUC regulations and is appropriately monitored and acted upon. Progression processes are clearly set in the whole programme as well as in each module. Tutors are in close collaboration with programme officials in monitoring students' academic status and performance. All processes are adequately supported by administrative staff of high expertise in their job, who are very dedicated to supporting all aspects of the programme.

Students interviewed during the evaluation event were extremely positive and expressed their absolute satisfaction with the way they are supported in their study and learning experience by members of staff and especially by the module and programme coordinators as well as by administrative services.

The programme shows a good graduation rate reaching an average of 53 graduates per academic year. Graduates can expand their employment opportunities in different areas of language and literature education as well as in education management and policy and in applied linguistics research.

Recognition of the students' first degrees is based on regulations and processes of the Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS). Recognition of formal and non-formal learning is also ensured by the particular admission criteria set by the programme that refer to a differential academic background of applicants in a wide range of Humanities and Social Sciences subjects. It is worth noting, however, that the method of determining English language knowledge of applicants (i.e., certificate or testing) is not specified in the admission requirements.

Student certification is governed by the regulations of the OUC, applying to all faculties, departments, and programmes of the institution. Students receive certification explaining the qualification they have gained, including the learning outcomes and the content they have achieved, as well as the level, content, and status of the studies they have pursued and successfully completed.

Students who are enrolled in individual modules of the MAGLL also receive relevant certification. The certification of studies is based on the ECTS system, which is applied across the curriculum.

Strengths

- Appropriate processes of admission are in operation.*
- Prospective students receive full and clear information about admission criteria and procedures.*
- Students are extremely satisfied with the support they receive from programme staff.*
- Academic qualifications held by candidates are appropriately recognised by the Cyprus NARIC authority.*
- Student certification is appropriately organized and implemented.*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The knowledge of English does not appear to be formally set to a CEFR level. We recommend that it is set to a minimum of B2.*
- To ensure that there are sufficient numbers of students admitted in each study period to maintain viability of the programme by considering competition in Cyprus and Greece in academic but also in financial terms.*

-To establish a better promotion strategy for the programme to attract larger number of students, e.g. by organising live events for presenting the programme to teachers associations, etc.”

OUC Response

The programme was characterized as ‘compliant’ in all sub-areas, i.e. 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria, 4.2 Student progression, 4.3 Student recognition, and 4.4 Student certification.

We will keep maintaining and expanding the programme’s strengths: appropriate processes of admission; admission requirements set in accordance with international standards; appropriate monitoring of student progression, with full and dedicated support from tutors and administration.

In terms of the areas of improvement and recommendations, the Programme fully acknowledges the assessors’ comments and suggestions. As regards the competitiveness of the Programme, following the assessors’ excellent recommendation, an exercise in costing and pricing was carried out by the Marketing and Competitiveness committee, following which a pilot deduction in tuition fees at over 40% will be offered to all incoming students in 2022-23. We have also focused on a better promotion strategy in collaboration with Marketing and including Open Days, course tasters etc., as suggested. The English language requirement to be set to B2 is actually a mandatory admissions criterion for the English-taught programmes. Given that the MA “Greek Linguistics and Literature” is offered in Greek, we will have to leave the admission requirement as it is, i.e. “a good command of English, sufficient for academic study”.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

The assessors' comments are as follows:

“Overall, the programme offers satisfactory resources to support student learning (including learning materials, IT infrastructure, and administrative support). The university library offers resources through access to the university library records (hard and electronic copies) and access to networks of libraries, via interlibrary loans and access to e-books and journals).

Student Induction

Online induction to distance and online learning is offered to students in the beginning of their studies.

Pedagogical approach

Pedagogical considerations seem to be taken into account in the design and delivery of the programme. There is an institutional infrastructure that supports the development and delivery of online and distance learning. This support infrastructure is operated by an office focused on quality assurance and by the educational technology lab as far as the underpinning technologies are concerned.

Learning technologies

The university employs a virtual learning environment (VLE, Moodle) and auxiliary technologies to support interaction between students and teaching staff. The VLE seems to be the central focus of online pedagogy and is used for weekly teleconferences, group discussions and additional activities. There was ample evidence in the discussion that we had with the team that they had developed interactive activities and exercises that supported student learning. The programme team have also developed a significant number of interactive activities to support formative assessment activities that prepare for the end-of-term exams. These represent 10% of the overall marks for each module. However, the examples we were given represented learning materials in which transmission (videos) rather than interaction was the main characteristic.

Assessment

Assessment approaches employ a model in which the end-of-term exams (at exam centres) are the key assessment event in the student journey (60%). According to the programme team, this is the expectation from regulatory and professional bodies. During the pandemic exam operations were moved online. The final exams employ an open book approach.

Career support

Career guidance is offered to students in the programme to support employment opportunities despite the fact that a significant number of students in the programme are professionals, who complete the programme for career advancement purposes.



Accessibility and software design

In terms of learning the team discussed their approach to making sure that students' special needs are embedded in the learning design of materials for the programme (e.g., adhering to the W3C guidelines).

Strengths

-The staff support functions led by academics and administrators seems to work well and there are professional development support activities in place for staff with appropriate breadth and depth.

-The use of formative assessment activities is commendable in the distance learning delivery.

-Online learning design conforms to accessibility requirements.

-Employing open-book exams is an excellent pedagogical practice and addresses issues of plagiarism and 'cheating' that can be common in distance learning environments.

-It was good to see that the online learning approach was recognised and that the OUC had received a relevant prize for this achievement.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Learning design

-Establishing a set of learning design benchmarks that all online modules would follow, could help students to have a uniform experience in their study of the modules of the programme.

-Further attention should be given to enhancing the interactive elements in the programme's online platform to provide personalised feedback to student input. The panel had the opportunity to discuss the structure of these activities and examples were given by the team, but we did not have the opportunity to see how these interactive activities work in practice.

-It would be interesting to see further advancements in the use of learning technologies (both quality and quantity) taking advantage of, for instance, the expertise the university has acquired by being involved in EU-funded projects.

Assessment

-The programme team should think about diversifying assessment by offering alternative forms of assessment, e.g., continuous assessment by coursework or project-based work instead of the current focus on end-of-term exams."



OUC Response

The programme was characterized as ‘compliant’ in all sub-areas, i.e. 5.1 Teaching and Learning Resources, 5.2 Physical Resources, 5.3 Human Support Resources, and 5.4 Student Support.

We will keep maintaining and expanding the programme’s strengths: we will keep enriching resources to support student learning (including learning materials, IT infrastructure, and administrative support). Pedagogical considerations will continue being central to the design and introduction of resources; interactive activities will be enriched.

In terms of the areas of improvement and recommendations, the Programme fully acknowledges the assessors’ comments and suggestions. Establishing a set of learning design benchmarks that all online modules will follow is an excellent suggestion that will definitely be taken on board. As regards interactive activities, it needs to be clarified that the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education introduced the requirement for such activities after the application was submitted in early 2020; during the assessment meeting we only presented some sample interactive weekly activities, in order to provide an indication of where we would be heading with these; we regret that we were unable to show the assessors how these would work in practice. Continuous assessment by coursework or project-based work instead of the current focus on end-of-term exams is, unfortunately, not an option because of restrictions on distance learning programmes by regulatory/degree ratification bodies such as DOATAP.



6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A



7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

N/A

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The assessors' comments are as follows:

“The OUC’s MA programme in Greek Linguistics and Literature is a programme with proven strengths. It adheres to the best practices, corresponding to the EQF, and deserves the best possible support, to enable it to continue to carry out its important mission. The programme has a very dedicated staff (administrative as well as teaching staff) and can refer to a track record of success placing its graduates in key educational, cultural, and administrative positions in Cyprus. The programme has also served as a launching pad for junior staff members to make the leap from adjunct/tutor to a tenure-track or more permanent academic position elsewhere. These are important achievements in an otherwise adverse climate of financial constraints (competition of other, less expensive programmes in Greece or ‘trendier’ MA programmes in Cyprus itself). The proposed revision of the programme, to reduce the length and thus also the cost of the programme, will be a decisive step to secure its future. Important, too, will be the appointment of a second permanent faculty member who will dedicate himself/herself fully to the academic coordination of the literature track (including taking on the occasional Ph.D. student in that field). This appointment, long overdue, will also secure a better balance between the linguistics and the literature track. It will also keep the two tracks in the kind of powerful synergy that has worked so well thus far and that has strengthened the learning experience of the students (as eloquently attested to by one of the alumni interviewees). It is to the staff’s credit that they have proposed the modernization of the programme themselves, and that they have been most keen themselves to keep the programme competitive as well as high-calibre.

The external evaluation committee members support the need to address the lack of an academic counsellor, who will keep a close watch on students’ progress. This student advisor could be shared among several programmes. As such, the role is different from the one described above.

Formative assessment activities in regular coursework need to be kept to a reasonable amount, commensurate with the workload of the students as well as the teaching staff.

Another suggestion relates to the optional requirement of the MA thesis, which counts for the equivalent of two thematic units (at 15 ECTS each and for a total of 30 ECTS). The external evaluation committee proposes to offer a pathway back to more coursework to students who, for various reasons, cannot finish the research and writing that the 12,000+ words thesis requires. This change would offer the students the prospect of finishing their degree in a timely fashion and would add to the student numbers in existing thematic units. Significantly, too, it would unburden the teaching staff from the weight of carrying over unfinished theses from semester to semester, if there is no prospect of them ever being completed. Since no credit goes to the staff member for supervising a thesis-‘forever’-in-progress, this change would help to protect some of the staff member’s time (on which there are already plenty of other demands). Many students will do better juggling full-time employment with essay requirement but less so with the thesis option. Graduating without a thesis but with extra coursework will not hinder their professional advancement, even if it pre-empts the option of going on to do advanced Ph.D. work.

There is always a need for more scholarship support for students. The same goes for research allowances for members of the teaching staff. The basic salary of the teaching staff needs to keep pace with comparable rates at other institutions in the open university system.”



OUC Response

We are delighted and extremely grateful to the assessors for their excellent comments.

We are grateful to the assessors for pointing out the need for a second Faculty member with an area of specialisation relevant to the proposed second track of Literature and Literary Literacies. A position with the description "Literary theory and Modern Greek Literature" was approved by Senate but recently turned down by the University Council. It is hoped that the assessors' recommendation will be accepted by the OUC administration.

We are happy to report that the position of Academic Counsellor (one per School) is on its way to being established.

Offering a pathway back to more coursework to students who, for various reasons, cannot finish the M.A. thesis is certainly an option; new study regulations have been introduced whereby students who are considering doing an M.A. thesis will first enroll in an induction/preparatory Module, during which they will have to do some considerable preparation for the thesis proposal, which in turn will give them a more accurate idea of the work involved. Moreover, the M.A. Thesis takes two semesters to complete. If during the first semester of the dissertation there are indications that the student will not be able to complete the dissertation, they will be encouraged to enroll in taught modules; the possibility will also be explored of enrolling in an independent study module, where any work done for the purposes of the dissertation may be channeled.

As regards the competitiveness of the Programme, following the assessors' excellent recommendation, an exercise in costing and pricing was carried out by the Marketing and Competitiveness committee, following which a pilot deduction in tuition fees at over 40% will be offered to all incoming students in 2022-23. We certainly hope that the OUC administration will take on board the assessor's suggestion for more scholarships and higher salaries / research allowances for the adjunct teaching staff.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Associate Professor Stavroula Tsiplakou	Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Academic Coordinator of the MA Programme Greek Linguistics and Literature	
Professor Vayos Liapis	Vice Rector, Chairman of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee	
Associate Professor Georgios Deligiannakis	Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee, Representative of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	
Associate Professor Antonis Zorpas	Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee, Representative of the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences	
Associate Professor Elpidoforos Soteriades	Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee, Representative of the Faculty of Economics and Management	
Ms Elena Gregoriou	Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee	
Ms Erato Ioanna Sarri	Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee	

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