

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 02 May 2022

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)
In Greek:
Πτυχίο Χορού (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, πτυχίο)
In English:
Bachelor of Dance (4 years, 240 ECTS,
Bachelors of Art)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**
In Greek:
In English:



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.*

We, the faculty members of the Dance Programme of the University of Nicosia, would like to express our genuine appreciation for the approach and constructive criticism of the EEC during its visit to the University of Nicosia. Moreover, we thank the Committee for the detailed report that has allowed us to reflect on our strength and weaknesses in order to fine-tune our practices for the benefit of every stakeholder in the Dance Programme, our alumni, and the local society in general.

We are pleased with the positive remarks of the EEC, which marked all criteria as fully "compliant." We would like to thank the EEC for recognising the strengths of the Dance Programme including a thorough process for Quality Assurance that adheres to European and international standards; good-quality teaching practices and research; a close connection between the faculty and students based on mutual respect encouraging productive collaborations and student-centered learning. Additionally, we would like to express our gratitude to the EEC for recognising the vitality of the Dance Programme and its importance to the cultural and dance landscape in Cyprus as the only BA programme in Dance in Cyprus.

We would particularly like to express our gratitude to the EEC for their positive comments regarding the structure and content of the programme and the focus on the individual learner. Additionally, we would like to thank the EEC for acknowledgment of the effectiveness of the student-centered learning, alumni employability and range of careers, the deep mutual respect and great communication between the faculty and the students, and the faculty commitment to innovative pedagogical strategies. Lastly, we appreciate the positive remarks regarding the infrastructure of the programme, including the facilities and human support resources.

We have considered the Committee's report and comments thoroughly and have acted upon it. Below you may find a detailed outline of our responses to all the raised points.

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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

The EEC has positively commented on the the standards for the policy for quality assurance, the design, approval, monitoring and review of the programme, public information, as well as information management are met. Most areas could be evaluated with the help of the written material (application etc), but aspects of the programme were clarified through presentations and Q&A during the onsite visit. The presentations and sharing of practice from academic staff were in tune with the current dance landscape.

The EEC has commented on the particular strengths of the BA in Dance Programme, such as:

1. "Given that this is the only dance programme at tertiary level in Cyprus, this programme offers the possibility for dance to be a viable career option in Cyprus and it is an important part of fostering the cultural landscape in the country."
2. Students go on to a wide range of careers within dance and the arts more broadly in Cyprus and abroad. Many alumni are paving the way for future generations to engage with dance and in turn growing the dance scene and visibility within the country."
3. High completion rate for the programme
4. "The connection to the regional labour market and relevant community and stakeholder groups is very well developed, and feedback from graduates on this point was very positive."
5. Opportunities for students to take part in performances, internships, and workshops locally and internationally.
6. The internal evaluation procedure is thorough and reliable.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

"There appear to be several modules that are for core study and, with the offer of optional modules as well, this could require significant resources given the number of students that are recruited. Perhaps the range of modules is part of the structure required by the university, however, if there is a way to streamline and focus course offerings through course redesign that could give more strength to the areas that are on offer then that would be of benefit."

Action/Response:

The BA in Dance course was redesigned in 2013 to offer a financially solvent course that would provide students with a well-rounded education in dance that combines practice and theory and allows students to gain skills in various dance techniques, improvisation and composition, contextual dance studies, dance science, and pedagogy. Additionally, the curriculum design follows the structure of all University courses.

"The objectives and reading lists for some courses do not seem to have been updated considering the most recent research. It could be possible to add newer and additional texts to courses on dance practices, to offer students progression also via texts and dialogue and work around these texts, not only through dancing."

Action/Response:

The faculty of the Dance Programme is committed to providing students with a varied, current, and up-to-date literature and research. Please see attached a sample of syllabi for courses with readings that include recent research.

"It seems that some of the dance courses use only one and the same text throughout different semesters. The committee would encourage reflection on the choices of texts and how they can be

incorporated into class work and activities. However, in the Q&A we find that updating course content and literature has happened or is on its way, and we recommend that this is continued.”

Action/Response:

All of the dance technique courses have been updated to include varied texts. Syllabi available on request.

“The committee recommends journals in the field of dance education – Research in Dance Education, and Journal of Dance Education – which specifically offer very current and diverse discussions regarding dance pedagogy and dance education from around the world.”

Action/Response:

Please consider the latest course syllabi attached for the Dance Pedagogy courses, DANC-445 and DANC-446 which include readings from the above mentioned journals.

“The pedagogical dimension of the programme arrives very late in the education and given that many alumni work as dance teachers we support a strengthening of this part of the programme. There could be the potential for dance pedagogy to weave further with some of the technique classes for example, and for reflective practices about pedagogical aspects of the technique and choreographic classes to be incorporated into the course designs. Collaboration with colleagues within the Education programme to share courses around topics such as pedagogical theory, aesthetic / bodily approaches to teaching and learning, and topics such as inclusion and diversity in education could be relevant to co-share between programmes. “

Action/Response:

Many of our courses include pedagogical aspects informally however we have also made an effort to focus on pedagogy in most courses in order to facilitate the development pedagogical skills of the students. For example, the DANC-329 Dance and Culture course begins with a reading, analysis and discussion of McNamara’s text on culturally relevant pedagogy, which provides students with a dance education theory and informs the course. Another example is Ballet Technique classes, which include theory and practice in teaching the classical ballet technique. Assignments include creating and teaching ballet combinations at the barre and center, a musical accompaniment section where students are given the opportunity to collaborate with the pianist in creating their combinations. Additionally, discussions on the progression of a ballet class and pedagogical tools in teaching ballet technique are also part of their practical training.

Starting in the Fall of 2022 Dance Programme students will have the possibility to take as an elective the Dance Education courses aimed at the Education students. Teaching dance in the kindergarten and primary school or joining us for some projects and teaching in school with the practicum course that could be eventually offered for dance and education students.

“Given the focus and outcomes of the programme that were presented, an awareness of ‘the healthy dancer’ is evident through body conditioning, Pilates, and release technique. Studying ballet and Graham techniques can be useful as part of the holistic study, but to develop versatile dancers other technical underpinnings are useful. At the same time the committee recommends that a greater focus on analysis, criticality, and reflection would be useful within practice and written work.”

Action/Response:

The faculty of the dance programme has carefully considered and continues to reflect on the trends and dynamics of dance in Cyprus. With a strong focus on contemporary dance, our courses are designed to provide practical training, improvisation skills, compositional methods, critical analysis, and pedagogical methodologies in order to enable students to work within the dance sector. Apart from ballet and various contemporary dance techniques (release, Graham, Lewitzky), we also offer courses in jazz dance, hip hop, Greek dance, improvisation, choreography, and ensemble in order to provide a versatile dance experience for our students. Within many contemporary dance courses, faculty employs somatic practices, improvisation scores, and analysis. Following the comments from the EEC we will include various self-reflection and critical

analysis assignment that combine theory and practice in addition to the ones that are already in place, such as the choreographer inspired improvisations, videodance projects, and practical projects in theoretical courses.

“Since Cyprus does hold a unique position in the Mediterranean region, the committee would encourage further exploration around the unique identity, framing, and marketing of the programme. Specifically, attention could be given to how the programme might connect with various dance communities, practices, and institutions in the ‘North African’, and ‘Middle Eastern’ sphere – especially in the contemporary dance fields in these regions. In turn, this could diversify locations for student recruitment. We understand that such building of networks takes time and are encouraging the programme to continue to actively pursue this, especially as the focus and emphasis on certain dance lineages, techniques, and histories in the programme is also currently being reflected on by staff.”

Action/ Response:

Following the comment from the EEC we are keen to expand our network with surrounding countries through research projects and artistic exchanges. One of the examples is that Dr. Pascal Caron and Dr. Dara Milovanovic are guest editing a special edition of the Cyprus Review which will concentrate on socio-political dynamics of the Cypriot performing arts. We have invited various scholars and artists from Cyprus and Greece to contribute in order to begin research collaborations.

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

Findings by the EEC

The EEC has positively noted the student-centred practices with a supportive dynamic between faculty and the students. The committee has noted that given the size of the programme, individualized attention is given to the students. Additionally, they have highlighted the strengths of the programme including emphasis on employability and opportunities of creativity and choreography work. The EEC has drawn particular attention the Programme’s handling of teaching during COVID times and continuous support noted by the students. The committee has positively commented on the department’s social contribution and standing and opportunities within the society.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

“The written application does not show a particularly well-developed mode of integrating or blending theory and practice, which is mentioned as a goal for the department. On the other hand, the Q&A with teachers illustrated that it exists and is happening, at least in some courses. We recommend that this trend continues to be developed throughout the programme. One possibility to consider further is the inclusion of body theories, for example somatic practices, to support the links between theory and practice, and the exploration of further professional development opportunities for staff.”

Action/Response:

The faculty of the Dance Programme are committed to providing students with an education that integrates practice and theory, as discussed in the various presentations and the discussion sections during the EEC on-site visit. A number of advanced courses (such as DANC-480 Dance Methodologies and DANC-493 Final Project) are dedicated to practice-as-research projects that allow students to combine traditional academic research with practical exploration of their choice. The BA in Dance Programme offers courses in Pilates and Yoga, however many of the contemporary dance technique faculty include a variety of somatic practices in their classes, including breath work, yoga, and improvisation that encourage a holistic approach to dance training. Additionally, the anatomy and kinesiology course offers opportunities for the students to apply the theoretical knowledge into practice through group work, projects and assignments.

“The streaming of technique class can bring some challenges rather than keeping students in their year groups. We understand the pragmatics for streaming classes and how combining diverse experiences of technique in the class can be challenging, however the assessment and learning outcomes need to reflect the individual learning journeys that take place within the streamed technique classes. Reflection on how and why the levels of technique class exist can also provide space for pedagogical innovation to unfold.”

Action/Response:

The Dance faculty supports the division of students into various levels that do not necessarily adhere to their year of study. This allows for individual focus on each student and ensure that they can develop at their own pace. Additionally, this decision considers the privileges of dance training and provides opportunity for students to engage in various dance forms without previous training. Lastly, it protects students in terms of health and safety as it encourages them to train in a responsible manner.

“Modes of assessment could be further developed. For example, only a few course descriptions mention students’ self-reflection and peer-to-peer feedback as part of the assessment. Blending theoretical assignments, with practical assignments across all courses in a variety of ways is encouraged”

Action/Response:

Following the comments from the EEC, the faculty of the Dance Programme has considered the modes of assessment and introduced self-assessments in forms of journals, goal settings, and reflection for all practical dance courses. Furthermore, the dance faculty has re-introduced peer-reviews in the DANC-480 Dance Methodologies and DANC-493 Final Project courses. The dance faculty highly values personal growth and progress in the assessment criteria such as in class performance and progress. The dance faculty is committed to revisit learning outcomes to clearly reflect the individual learning journeys.

“During the Q&A we experienced that the department has started to look more critically on some of the foundations of the programme, for example, the choice of major dance genres taught, how to deal with dance forms outside of the Western canon, how colonialization affects the programme, and choice of cultural viewpoints. We support this line of thinking, and we understand that it might be part of long-term development and planning for the programme, and in response to the demands and needs of the student market – locally and globally.”

Action/Response:

The Dance Faculty is committed to continually reviewing our teaching practices and curriculum to reflect the changing landscapes of dance research and development. Employing culturally relevant pedagogy is at the core of our pedagogical mission and curriculum design, thus, all of the courses will take into consideration the socio-political ideas that surround dance in the area and reflect them in the teaching and research.

“There are opportunities for student voice to be heard but see that the introduction of a regular twice-yearly student forum for example, would give a platform that demonstrates that the faculty value the student voice in a formal setting. This can be a forum that includes celebration of quality as well as problem-solving if students wish for change and / or development.”

Action/Response:

Following the comments of the EEC we will introduce a bi-annual student forum to allow students to voice their concerns, ideas, and suggestions on how to improve their learning experience. These will be held in January and June.

2. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Findings by the EEC

The EEC has commented that the size of the faculty is appropriate for the teaching needs of the programme. The committee has positively commented on the faculty commitment to their teaching practice and genuine interest and care for the students of the programme. The EEC has commented that the faculty are qualified within their relevant areas, who are well networked within the local dance sector.

The EEC has highlighted the strength of the programme by commenting on the university's excellent programme for professional development. The committee has commented on the programme's research outputs, including publications and performances.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

[Given that the fulltime staff members have participated in the university Teaching Certificate, we recommend the department to find ways to continue to support staff to creating a wider variety of pedagogical and innovative methods. This is where we would encourage the engagement with international colleagues where relevant (and as funding allows) to have diverse guest academics teaching on the programme or visiting to engage with academic staff in professional development activities. During the Q&A we are informed that the possibility for teachers from both dance, music, and education to cooperate will improve, and we see this as very positive - both concerning teaching, but also in forming joint research projects, which would create stronger synergies of teaching and research.]

Action/Response:

Following the EEC suggestion, we are currently working on an Erasmus funding Dance Education week, which will take place in 2022/2023 academic year and will be geared towards Dance faculty and community dance educators.

Synergies between teaching and research are generally strong, however, the educational and pedagogical aspects of the teaching research nexus could be emphasized with more strength. There could be development in relation to co-teaching of courses, and this could be supported by visiting / guest teachers and international academic colleagues. This can offer diverse teaching experiences for students and a professional development and collaboration opportunity for teaching staff to reflect on what they are teaching and how the courses are designed. Greater engagement with research towards PhD study would raise the status even more of the team, especially in the realm of dance education

Action/Response:

Currently, the Dance Programme offers a balanced and diverse dance degree that contains Dance Education courses but not a concentration, thus, many of the faculty members do not engage in dance education research. Please note that Dr. Dara Milovanovic has two papers accepted in the leading dance education journals including Dance Education in Practice and Journal of Dance Education due for release in 2022.

Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

(ESG 1.4)

The EEC has commented positively on the admission processes that the Dance Programme employs and follows. They have highlighted the Dance Programme's focus on the needs of individual prospective students, including an interview which includes the student's voice and enables them an opportunity to discuss the students' ambitions and interests within the field.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC has commented **“Since the university has a strong marketing department, we hope that special resources could be given to the dance department for developing a stronger outreach profile, one that also would mirror the current ideas of changing parts of the programme content. This is where we see that the university's emphasis on internationalization could also come into play, and there could be strategic scoping of what international markets might be particularly interested in engaging with a dance degree.”**

Action/Response: The marketing department has already placed digital/internet advertisements for the Dance Programme. Additionally, the marketing department has plans to create a dance specific promotional video by a local videodance artists to promote the programme. Lastly, the Dance Programme has run an advertisement on the Dancing Opportunities website a number of times in order to increase our international student recruitment.

The EEC has commented **“We think the design of the audition procedure could be adjusted, especially if reflection and change is made to the dance techniques offered. Perhaps offering a more workshop-based class, with improvisational tasks, creative movement tasks, collaborative dance moments, discussions, and some dance technique, could be an approach to consider.”**

Action/Response:

Following the comments from the EEC, our audition will consist of a contemporary dance class that will include an improvisational and compositional section only. Although, the faculty of the Dance Programme have always employed this methodology in our auditions, at this point have decided to highlight it more and eliminate ballet in the audition. After the students are granted a position in the Dance Programme, they will be asked to take a ballet placement exam to determine their level.

3. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Findings by the EEC

The EEC has commented positively on the teaching and learning resources available to the faculty and students with a particular emphasis on a well-resourced and supported library with an extensive database access to full journals and e-books. Additionally, the EEC has deemed the facilities and students support services as suitable.

Furthermore, the EEC has highlighted particular strengths of the university, which has excellent teaching and learning resources that the she staff and students actively engage with. Also, the EEC commented that the dance studios are well equipped, and the use of spaces within the performing arts community in Cyprus (local theatres, galleries, etc) enables students to perform and experience different performance locations.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC has identified the following as areas of improvement and recommendations:

“There is the potential for further communication and collaboration between different resource departments and how different units within the university might exchange ideas and possibilities. Given that the large dance studio space is shared with others outside of the dance programme, there is the potential to consider how resources for further dance spaces could be implemented in a strategic planning alongside the possible growth of the programme. It is also encouraged that library resources are continued to be regularly updated and accessible with current ebooks and journals, for example.”

Action/Response:

At this time, the teaching needs of the Dance Programme are facilitated by the available studios.

The dance faculty communicates with the library staff annually to provide them with a list of book and journals that we require for our teaching and research. These are promptly ordered by the library and available to the dance faculty and students within weeks.



4. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

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7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

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D. Conclusions and final remarks

The Faculty of the Dance Programme would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their careful, professional, and through examination and evaluation of the BA in dance during the hybrid evaluation. We would like to express our appreciation for the positive and encouraging feedback and collegial support that has provided an opportunity for us to reflect on the structure of the programme, the curriculum, teaching and learning, student support and progression, and admission criteria.

We greatly appreciate the positive comments of the EEC regarding the design of the programme, the caliber and commitment of the academic staff in terms of quality assurance, teaching and research, the importance in the cultural scene of Cyprus and in the region, excellent industry links and opportunities for student performances and internships, and continued efforts to develop and improve teaching methodologies. Additionally, we would like to express our gratitude for the positive remarks regarding the infrastructure of the programme and a well-developed and maintained student support system. We would like to thank the EEC for their recognition of the carefully cultivated and maintained faculty students relationships.

We have carefully reviewed the EEC report and have carefully considered recommendations of the EEC and have provided responses and actions in order to incorporate these into the programme as outlined above particularly to their comments on the following:

- Updating programme and course materials.
- Further reflection and consideration regarding the choices of dance techniques and genres within the programme.
 - Consideration of threading the dance education and pedagogy aspects of the programme more throughout the whole degree.
 - Continued collaboration with colleagues in the Education programme.
- Continued exploration of the unique identity of the programme, regional links, and the directions and lineages of dance that the programme attends to.
- A greater focus on analysis, criticality, and reflection within the course offerings.
 - Further internationalization where possible.
- Ongoing consideration of an MA programme, particularly in the dance education area.
- Greater engagement with research towards PhD study for staff would raise the status even more of the team, especially regarding dance education.
 - Initiate formal student forums for the student voice to be further engaged with.
 - Broadening and diversifying recruitment where possible.
 - Adjusting audition processes to be in line with other shifts within the programme, and to enhance recruitment possibilities.

We thank the committee for their positive evaluation and constructive suggestions, which will allow us to continue to improve the BA programme in Dance.

E. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Elena Papanastasiou	Dean of School of Education	
Dr. Dara Milovanovic	Head of Department of Music and Dance	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: June 17, 2022

