

External Evaluation Report

(Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** School of Education
- **Department:** Department of Education
- **Programme(s) of study - Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
Programme 1 – Primary Education BEd
In Greek:
Δημοτική Εκπαίδευση (4 έτη/240 ECTS, πτυχίο)
In English:
Primary Education (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bed)
Language(s) of instruction: Greek
- **Programme 2 – Education Sciences MEd**
In Greek:
Επιστήμες Αγωγής (1,5-2 έτη / 90-120 ECTS, Μάστερ)
In English:
Education Sciences (1,5 years, 90 ECTS, Med)
Language(s) of instruction: Greek
- **Programme 3 – Education Sciences PhD**
In Greek:
Επιστήμες Αγωγής (3 έτη, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)
In English:
Education Sciences (3 years, 180 ECTS, PhD)
Language(s) of instruction: Greek

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 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The relevant documentation was delivered well in time for the evaluation. Two days of virtual/distance site visits were conducted on the 15th and 16th of February 2021. A virtual tour of the premises gave further insights. The personnel and students were very well prepared and the atmosphere was positive and constructive. In addition to the material provided in advance, the in site presentations offered insights into both the Department of Education and the four programmes to be evaluated. In this report the EEC will comment on all programmes more generally, when that is appropriate. Programme-specific comments are written below when relevant.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

| Name | Position | University |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Patrik Scheinin | Professor, Chair | University of Helsinki |
| Joe O'Hara | Professor, Member | Dublin City University |
| Josefina Sala Roca | Professor, Member | Autònoma de Barcelona |
| Olaf Zawacki-Richter | Professor, Member/DL expert | University of Oldenburg |
| Rafaelia Ioannou | Ms, Student member | University of Cyprus |

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*
- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
 - sub-areas*
 - standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
 - some questions that EEC may find useful.*
- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*
- *Under each assessment area it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*
- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding each programme of study as a whole.*
- **The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.**

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

- 1.1. Policy for quality assurance**
- 1.2. Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review**
- 1.3. Public information**
- 1.4. Information management**

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
 - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
 - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
 - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
 - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
 - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
 - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
 - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
 - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
 - *benefits from external expertise*
 - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
 - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
 - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
 - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
 - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
 - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
 - *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*

- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
 - *key performance indicators*
 - *profile of the student population*
 - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
 - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
 - *learning resources and student support available*
 - *career paths of graduates*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*

- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

Findings

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

GENERAL COMMENTS

1.1. Policy for quality assurance

The Quality Assurance System covers external and internal processes closely. The University follows the external regulations and have a University Internal Quality Assurance Committee (UIQAC) in which participate the Vice Rector of academic affairs, several teaching research faculty, and students. At Education Faculty there is also a Commission on Quality (QA) that with the help of the Coordinator assesses the program development. Students also anonymously provide teacher assessments. Teachers must consider the quality of their teaching activities, including their assessments, when they apply for promotion.

The teaching staff members have a tool to check for plagiarism and encourage students to use it. Teachers explain that when they detect levels of overlaps over 15% they analyse carefully if there is a plagiarism. The MA and PhD students that participate in the discussion session complain that some students have high levels of overlaps (30%) without any consequence. Nevertheless, as programs like Turnitin, and similar programs, detect overlaps that are not necessarily plagiarism, it's possible that there was a misunderstanding.

There is a procedure to deal with students' grievances and petitions through the Department of Academic Affairs. Also, they can dispute their semester grades before one month after the announcement of results. Students can present also non-academic complaints electronically (Student Portal) or personally to the Head of the Department of Student Affairs.

There is neither budgeted time nor a policy of recognition to develop innovative university pedagogical projects. Teachers have some overload in teaching responsibilities. Even if it is understood that their teaching does not exceed 9 hours per week, they teach three different subjects every semester and this diversity is demanding. The EEC finds, that typically counting just the teaching hours when a teacher teaches in the traditional sense tends to lose sight of the real work load – which should be taken into account when allocating personnel and strategic planning.

The Department report mentioned that there was a prize for teaching quality but during the visit we found that it was not implemented.

1.2. Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

The programs are subject to formal institutional approval which involves the Department, Faculty and University Senate.

When the University starts a new program, there is also an Internal Programme Evaluation Process (IPEP) of it after the first two years. In the documents submitted, this evaluation has been attached.

The three study programmes (BA, MA and Doctoral) define their objectives, learning outcomes, methodology, assessment strategies, syllabus, course descriptions, teaching staff, etc. Considering the documents as well as the teaching staff and students interviews, the programmes seem to be appropriate, lead students to progress continuously. The student's assignments are consistent with the courses' ECTs. Nevertheless, the programs bibliography of the three study programmes (BA, MA and Doctoral) published in the web are not quite up to date. the reason given was the time between submitting the self-report and the EEC visit, which is understandable.

The qualification system is clear and well delimited, and in accordance with regulations. The feedback is provided at a suitable time.

Students have different kinds of tutorial/orientation support to progress in their studies successfully, to help them with different kinds of problems (disabilities, emotional issues, etc.) or enjoy the academic life.

The courses involve different types of student-centred methodologies and activities to develop students' skills. Students manifest their satisfaction with the courses' methodology.

The assessment typically is comprehensive and varied: exams, presentations, exercises, individual and group works, etc.

The Department reports about 89% of employment rates for their graduates . But they do not know in which kind of jobs they are employed.

1.3. Public information

On the public website, university publish programs, selection criteria, intended learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment procedures, course description, etc. In the web, there is also information about life at university, facilities, academic and leisure activities, calendar, learning opportunities as program exchanges etc. There is also a Student's Handbook that gathers the links to the websites with essential information for students.

But the website does not provide public information about pass rates, or graduate employment information (seminars, internships, etc.).

1.4. Information management

The key performance indicators are not available either in the application, nor on the web. The dropout rates are neither provided nor discussed in the form. Moreover, in the application form there isn't information about the student profile - apart from if they come from Cyprus or Greece (as for example gender and age), their progression and satisfaction. During the visit the committee could discuss these issues and ask for data on it. Later the Department provided data about the dropout rate of the BA Primary Education.

In the session with the students we asked them about possible reasons for dropout, and they reported that to their knowledge students leave because they weren't able to do the extensive learning activities that are required especially as many work simultaneously. A second and somewhat correlated reason given was that they cannot afford the tuition fees, and therefore drop out after taking the courses they most need - or tend to move to programmes in public universities when they can.

In the visit the required data about student feedback was provided. In general, students provide quite impressive assessments of teachers and instruction. Similarly, in our meeting with them, they showed high levels of satisfaction with teachers who are perceived as very committed in their supervision, and helpful. This is congruent with the policy of the university to provide good quality supervision to students in the different aspects.

The satisfaction evaluations of students are provided to each teacher, program coordinator and head of the Department. They have the responsibility to detect and solve problems.

In the application report, it is mentioned that there is an Alumni Office that tracks the employment figures of graduates. During the visit, the department reported a high employment rate (89%); however, they didn't know in which kind of jobs the graduates were employed.

The number of students in the BA Primary Education is very small (32 students in total), with an average admission rate of 16 students. In this programme the students have a very individualised supervision and they get their graduation in 4.5 years on average. According the Department presentation, there is 370 students in DL MA program, and 21 in the Doctoral program. Since 2010 there have been 19 PhD graduates.

The University has different exchange opportunities for students. The Department students participate in exchange programs, but they do not receive students because the classes are in Greek. The only exceptions are students from Greece. Most students of the conventional programmes come from Greece, especially in the Primary Education BA. Nevertheless, these students are regular students, not exchange students.

Strengths

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

GENERAL

1.1. Policy for quality assurance

The internal Quality Assurance System seems quite established (Education Primary BEd , Science Education MEd, and Science Education MEd Doctoral program). The university has a tool (Turnitin) to check for plagiarism.

1.2. Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

The pedagogical support to students provides individualized attention and the students feel that their teachers are supportive and reliable.

The University has specific programs to support students with special needs. When a student has special needs, a confidential e-mail is sent to their teachers with the guide and orientations to attend her/him.

The Department reports high employment rates of former students. Nevertheless, the kind of jobs is not registered.

1.3. Public information

The website is intuitive and there is a book of guidance for the students. (Education Primary BEd , Science Education MEd, and Science Education MEd Doctoral program) is clear and follow the same structure (admission, assessment, graduation, learning outcomes, academic path, semester breakdown and faculty). It's easy to find the information of each program. In the web page, there is a site for the School of Education, where the information of the programs are published.

There is also a link to the Department of Education with the information about Faculty members and organization, research and the Internal QA Committee with the names of its members.

1.4. Information management

There is a circuit to detect problems with student satisfaction, and professors must consider this data in their self-assessment report. Nevertheless, in the open session students didn't know which students were their representatives, they feel that teachers were so supportive that they can just explain to them any problem or to the coordinator any problem and for that they did not need their student representatives.

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.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1.1. Policy for quality assurance

We recommend supporting and promoting teaching innovation projects with a specific budget and recognition. This will provide the University more recognition in their efforts to provide high quality education.

The plagiarism detection program Turnitin is widely used at the Department. It is used by teachers to detect overlaps and check if they are plagiarism. It could be good to check how students use their access to Turnitin: Plagiarism is not acceptable at any rate, and students can use their

access to the program to try to mislead e.g. by just changing some words or translating from a different language. Students need to learn the value of intellectual property and how to cite.

1.2. Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

The bibliography included in the description of the courses of the three programs (Education Primary BEd , Science Education MEd, and Science Education MEd Doctoral program) that are in the web and in the form are not updated. We recommend updating them. The updating of the information is a sign of the quality of a program content. On the other hand, the admission criteria for Education Primary Bed is not provided in the web.

1.3. Public information

According to the standards, it is necessary to include information about graduate employment support and key performance indicators in the web so that they can be consulted by general public and especially potential candidates for student and faculty recruitment. This could be included for each program.

1.4. Information management

Key performance indicators, including career paths of graduates for the three programs, should be collected and properly processed, and analysed thoroughly. Data analysis is one of the best resources to improve programs and plan next steps in a changing Higher Education scenario. The Nicosia University is facing a challenging scenario and is planning to offer some international courses abroad. The analysis of this data could be very helpful. The data we demand was provided and analysed after our request, but the Quality Commission should periodically collect and analyse data and the possible explanations of the results for future improvements.

The path career of alumni should be studied and more detailed information collected. The employment rate and type may depend on several factors, but good rates and jobs in line with the subject studied also strengthen the reputation to the University.

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

| Sub-area | | <i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> | | |
|------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | <i>Primary Education BEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences MEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences PhD</i> |
| 1.1 | Policy for quality assurance | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 1.2 | Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 1.3 | Public information | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 1.4 | Information management | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |

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

Sub-areas

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

2.2 Practical training

2.3 Student assessment

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for and method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*

- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings

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

Findings

General Comment

The three programmes under discussion are complex, considered and provide a range of evidence relating to the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment undertaken. The commitment of the University to ensuring high standards in this field is evident from both the documentation and the site visit. While a more detailed programme level evaluation will be provided below, some general comments as to the approach to teaching, learning and assessment can be outlined here.

Processes and Assessment

At the most general level there is both a rhetorical and practical commitment to the full engagement of students in the processes of teaching and learning. The learning outcomes for programmes are detailed and developmental – clearly using elements of Bloom’s taxonomy to create a structured engagement that leads students to an evaluative and synthetic understanding of the relevant materials in each of the three courses under investigation. This is useful at all levels, undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral and there appears to be an appropriately different focus at each of these levels when engaging with thematically similar areas educational research and teaching.

There is a welcome commitment to engagement with and undertaking of research in all programmes evaluated. Clearly at Doctoral level this is at the core of programme provision, however it is noteworthy that at BA and MA level, students are encouraged to engage with research and are provided with key skills to undertake research relevant to their own practice contexts.

The needs of the students appear to be taken account of in the design of programme pathways with a good range of core and elective modules being offered on all three programmes. The structure and rationale for these pathways appear to make sense in the context of the range of student interests, staff expertise and employment opportunities available.

Modes of delivery also appear to be appropriately varied with extensive use being made of the MOODLE VLE and other supportive technology. The class observed indicated a varied and interactive implementation of technology supported learning at undergraduate level with genuine engagement on the part of the students. This impression was confirmed by student representatives who all emphasised the importance of teaching and learning relationships created and the commitment of staff to maintain high quality learning environments notwithstanding the challenges caused by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The offering of support provided to students with additional learning needs is something that is being constantly developed but clearly is a core part of the philosophy of the institution. Indeed, there is an impressive commitment to transferring the practical and research knowledge of members of the Education Faculty to the University as a whole in this area. This self-identification by members of Faculty as a teaching and learning resource for each other and for the institution

as a whole is noteworthy and indicates a real commitment to enhancing the overall quality of the student learning experience.

As with all programmes, there are some areas that might be further explored in the area of teaching and learning. One challenge for the evaluators is the somewhat equivocal status of course descriptions provided for each of the three programmes. The EEC recognises the dynamic nature of the curriculum development process and understands that the challenges posed by COVID-19 related delays resulted in an extended delay between the submission of teaching and learning material and the evaluation process. Having said that, the nature of the materials posed some problems.

Although presented in a manner that would suggest that they were the most up to date outlines of each of the courses taught, engagement during the onsite visit suggested that this was not the case and that other, more current course outlines were available and provided to students. This is important in a number of areas. With regards to assessment, for example, it is at times unclear as to what type of assessment is being undertaken in each module. There is a generic statement included in many course descriptions suggesting that upwards of seven types of assessment are in place. Engagement at the onsite visit indicated that this was not the case and that instead this was a menu from which assessment modes were chosen.

A second area with regards to the documentation relates to the currency of the bibliographies and the relevance of much of the reading quoted to programmes that present themselves as being at the cutting edge of provision. The University staff provided a robust defence of this indicating, again, that the material presented was not the most up to date version of the course outlines and also pointing out the challenge of providing contemporary texts in the Greek language. These are legitimate observations and ones that the evaluation panel acknowledge and appreciate. However a number of points need to be noted. Firstly, even when modules are dealing specifically with areas of Greek culture and language, the majority of materials cited are over a decade old. Secondly, when international areas of research in English are being cited the references are still quite old. A good exemplar here is the reference to Distributed Leadership in the MEd programme. The reference is from 2005 and while adequate, it seems odd at the very least that none of the work undertaken in this dynamic field since is cited (NOTE – This is just one example and is not in any way to highlight negatively this programme or teacher – there are many, many other similar examples).

Subsequent to the visit, additional sample course outlines were provided that indicated that there were up to date teaching and learning materials available and that these addressed some of the issues raised – at least in those course outlines provided.

There are other general issues that might be worth noting. One is the nature and structure of the appeals process. There is a designated mechanism involving an appropriate and impressive ladder of referral. This was referred to by staff during its site visit and it is seen as being an important part of the teaching and learning process. The EEC recognises and appreciates this. However it also notes that given the nature and size of the programmes there is a danger that the engagement of students with this process happens at a very personalised level. There might be some thought given to a structure of appeal and support separate to Faculty members for more complex appeals. Having said that, engagement with the student body indicated great satisfaction with the amount and quality of support provided to students experiencing challenges. Staff at all levels were commended for their approachability and their willingness to work with students to provide routes out of the particular personal or academic challenges being experienced.

A second issue is the decision to set a 2.0 GPA as a pass mark. More justification might be provided for this. It is clearly seen as a quality mark and may act as that however from a teaching and assessment perspective, it is always useful to explain why the full range of marking is not considered appropriate for a programme. This is particularly important for education programmes such as this which seek to model best practice for teaching and learning professionals.

Practice

Two of the programmes have practice elements – one to a significant level and one in a designated strand. More detail will be spent on these in the programme reports however at a general level the approach to practice appears appropriate, developmental and provide an integrative opportunity for students to combine their theoretical knowledge with practical experience. The documentation provided at BA level in particular is well designed and provides students with a clear understanding of the purpose and operation of the practice element of the programme. Assessment of the practice elements is appropriate and developmental and emphasises reflection, self-assessment, professional development, and practice focused conversation.

Findings for Primary Education BEd

The BEd is a well-structured, varied and innovative four year Initial Teacher Education Programme. The programme has 240 ECTS which are divided as follows:

Compulsory Course – 150 Credits

Elective Courses – 65 Credits

Practicum – 25 Credits

The compulsory course content is revolves around the tradition educational ‘disciplines’ (sociology, philosophy, history etc) as well as core curricular areas (mathematics, Greek culture, music etc). In addition, there are a range of elective pathways linked to general and specialist areas of interest. Overall it is a rich and varied curriculum that provides a good basis for the development of high-quality teachers.

There are a wide range of teaching, learning and assessment practices adopted and there is a stepped, iterative development of students from initial engagement with topics to their final practice application in the fourth-year practicum. Programme documentation, particularly that relating to the practicum, is impressive and gives a good overview of the course and its objectives.

Findings for Education Sciences MEd

The M Ed is a complex, interesting and well-designed programme specifically targeted at education professionals interested in developing their skills and competences across a range of practice areas.

The programme has 8 pathways, 7 of which have 90 ECTS. The 8th pathway, Special Education, includes a practicum and therefore has a credit total of 120 ECTS.

The M Ed combines compulsory courses with elective courses with the option for a postgraduate assignment in the following manner:

Compulsory: 20 Credits

Elective : 70 Credits

OR

Thesis : 30 Credits

The range of pathways offered is impressive and covers many of the current key areas of educational research including special education, educational technology etc and as such offers a real choice for the teaching and wider educational community in Cyprus to develop as professionals and practitioners.

Student feedback indicated that a very positive learning environment is created staffed by highly committed and supportive teachers. The site visit indicated an academic staff keen to bring their own research expertise across a wide range of research areas and a commitment to ensuring that high standards are maintained.

Assessment is varied insofar as it can be determined and students indicated a sense of ownership of the programme.

Findings for Education Sciences PhD

This is a very interesting and well-structured PhD targeting highly committed individuals who wish to engage in high level research in the broad area of research. With an ECTS credit weighting of 240, the PhD is clearly designed to ensure that participants have a solid ground in the core competences of Doctoral research – methods, ethics etc- as well as being given an opportunity to engage in original research in a subject area of their choice. The PhD has an interesting structure that emphasises development in the initial stages followed by more independent engagement at the latter stages. As such, the key assessment point is that of the 'Colloquium' which is a transition point from taught to research. There is an impressive range of explanatory material outlining the rationale for this particular structure which is clearly embedded in the twin requirements of research excellence and student wellbeing.

The learning outcomes at programme level demonstrate a programme committed to enabling the development of high level research and professional skills and the assessment methods adopted appeared to confirm this.

The onsite visit confirmed genuine commitment on the part of staff and students to the programme. Students in particular emphasised the supportive and nurturing environment created while at the same time acknowledging the challenges of engaging in such high level research. Staff clearly saw this as a critically important programme and sought to emphasise their commitment to excellence at all levels.

Strengths

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

Strengths for Primary Education BEd

- A well-structured and practical set of Learning Outcomes that are linked to the developmental and academic needs of Initial Teacher Education students
- A wide range of teaching, learning and assessment practices that offer students the opportunity to enhance their teaching skills in a theoretical and practical ways
- A strong student support environment that focuses on the overall wellbeing of the student

- The integration of core, elective and specialist strands in a manner that allows ITE students derive maximum benefit from the academic expertise of core programme staff
- A three stage practicum structure that emphasises observation, supported engagement and ultimately independent teaching
- A considered emphasis on reflective engagement and self-evaluation as key assessment components of both the practicum and theoretical aspects of the programme
- A somewhat unusual but welcome commitment to developing core research skills at an early stage of the teaching continuum
- Clear linkage to national and international qualifications frameworks ensuring opportunities for employment within Cyprus and Greece.
- Good use of technology supported learning where appropriate.

Strengths for Education Sciences MEd

- Variety and structure of programme offerings
- Commitment to embedding research interests of academic staff into teaching
- Range and appropriate complexity of learning outcomes at programme and strand level
- Use of a wide range of technology to support learning
- Supportive pastoral care structure
- Commitment to providing students with research skills to allow them enhance their own professional learning and teaching settings
- An apparently wide range of assessment modes
- A well-structured and developmental practicum for the Special Education Pathway
- Clear linkage to national and international qualifications frameworks ensuring opportunities for employment within Cyprus and Greece.
- Provision of a range of access pathways for students emphasising the importance of practice experience

Strengths for Education Sciences PhD

- The programme has managed to develop a PhD structure that has both a strong credit bearing taught element as well as a significant research piece
- Connection to national and international qualifications frameworks
- The matching of student research theses to staff research expertise
- The high graduation rate
- The focus on areas of systemic importance for education at a national, regional and international level
- Commitment to student support and wellbeing
- Well-developed and appropriate set of learning outcomes
- Indications of a range of innovative teaching and learning opportunities

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.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Primary Education BEd

- Consideration might be given to the balance between the practicum element and the taught element of the programme. At the outset the EEC would like to commend the decision to include the programme of Initial Teacher Education in a HE setting. This is in keeping with best international practice and avoids the trend to move ITE entire to school settings. Whilst acknowledging this, it is worth noting that a practicum of slightly above 10 % (25 out of 240 credits) is somewhat low by international standards. While it is clear that the practice element is added to by the subject specialisms, consideration might be given to expanding this element.
- A recognition of the potential challenges of having multiple assessment points in each module. The EEC recognises the commitment to using both formative and summative assessment on the B Ed programme however the significant number of assessments – up to 6 on in the course outlines provided – could pose a problem for students should it be repeated across the entire programme.
- Specification of nature and rationale for passing grade – needs to be qualitatively high enough to ensure that person has knowledge and skills required to pass the course

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Education Sciences MEd

- Consideration as to the appropriateness of the optional nature of the research thesis element. There is a strong case to be made that at Masters level, all students should undertake a substantive piece of original research. This is important given that ITE programmes at BA level do not include research elements in thesis format, here again the nature of programme delivery seems to ensure that at Masters level very few students have the opportunity to engage with and produce original research. This is something of a lost opportunity given the commitment to developing core research skills across the programme.
- This latter point might be linked to a systemic change at national level that sees ITE move to Masters level. International good practice would suggest that teachers with a strong commitment to research and with a good set of research skills are capable of changing with changing educational environments.
- Clarity on nature and number of assessments
- Need to ensure that all bibliographies are updated and include the most relevant and current research available
- Exploration of balance between number of pathways and student numbers
- Examination of reason for relatively small rate of student graduation and link to assessment modalities adopted in the Department

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Education Sciences PhD

- Consideration of current prioritisation of research as the key motivator over and above the legitimate interest in professional and career enhancement. This might be better achieved through the development of a Professional Doctorate (EdD) pathway for individuals interested in focusing on practice focused Doctoral research
- Opportunities for students to present research national and internationally at conferences
- Clarity as to current level of GPA required to progress

- Relative weighting of final research project to taught element
- Need for updated course descriptors for all course outlines provided clearly demonstrating the link between current research and programmes taught
- Opportunities for staff to develop their own research profiles through the provision of research leave, targeted teaching support with a view to maintaining their capacity to work as innovative research supervisors.

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

| Sub-area | | <i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> | | |
|------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | <i>Primary Education BEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences MEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences PhD</i> |
| 2.1 | Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 2.2 | Practical training | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 2.3 | Student assessment | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

3.1. Teaching staff recruitment and development

3.2. Teaching staff number and status

3.3. Synergies of teaching and research

3.1. Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2. Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

3.3. Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*
- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

Findings

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

GENERAL COMMENTS

3.1. Teaching staff recruitment and development

In the application form, the different teaching staff types are clearly explained. The described recruitment and promotion process is clear and transparent.

The teaching staff qualifications and requirements are adequate to the programs.

The teaching-skills training university program is provided by the Department. The Department teaching staff does not have external training seminars, the pedagogical support comes from their colleagues. The Head of the Department attends classes periodically so as to provide feedback to the teachers. This is quite rare and the Department is to be recommended for such responsible and efficient practices.

A good teaching performance, as well as research, is part of the requisites for promotion. Since the University is a private institution, the main funding comes from tuitions. Therefore the teaching staff considers good teaching performance a prerequisite to continue being part of the teaching staff.

There is no apparent innovation policy in teaching. So, the innovation initiatives depend on the will of teachers, but does maybe not get the recognition it deserves. Since the students enrol mainly in the DL program, teachers need to have considerable skills in and innovative use of e-learning tools and platforms.

The Greek language that is used in most of the programmes are the main limitation to attract visitors and students from abroad. Also, the internal committee pointed out that the Greek language is one important obstacle to attract more students.

3.2. Teaching staff number and status

Nearly all teaching staff listed in the application form have a PhD. Their subjects and research are also relevant for their instruction. So, they have an appropriate qualification for Nicosia the Bed and Med programmes.

Considering the number of students in the DL Med, the number of teachers seems quite limited. Nevertheless, the interviewed students and questionnaires report that the time and effort teachers use to support them is enough. The number of student varies quite dramatically from year to year, so even when the Department teaching staff is limited, the department will need to hire more teachers if the planned growth in the number of students becomes a reality. To achieve the stived for reputation and further increase in applicant numbers, the quality has to be ensured also in the future. Investments will be necessary.

A full-time teacher typically has 9 hours per week as teaching workload. If they are involved in funded research they can get a discharge of teaching hours, and get payments from the research project. They don't have a sabbatical research period as teaching staff in the Cyprus Public Universities do. Even when the main funding of the University comes from tuition fees, the number of students applying and enrolled are influenced by University rankings - in which number he quality of research performance has a great influence.

3.3. Synergies of teaching and research

The Department participates in international research projects in collaboration with foreign Universities.

The teaching staff publication is in accordance with their expertise and their teaching assignments in the programs. Some of the teachers have an excellent research trajectory and others a more irregular research activity and production. Offering PhD students positions is linked to the teaching staff potential for research activities. Teachers who do not engage in research for a longer period should not assume the prime responsibility for the supervision of PhD students.

Strengths

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

GENERAL COMMENTS

3.1. Teaching staff recruitment and development

Almost all teachers have a PhD, so they have the requirements to teach BA and MA degrees. The teaching staff is highly committed to their teaching tasks and support and supervise students. The promotion process is clear and involves teaching, research and social impact. It is typical that academic responsibilities are not included in such lists. The EEC finds, that this is not in the best interests of the University. If we are only interested in three things, we get only three things. And without good people investing time and effort, university affairs atrophy. This typically has dire consequences for "the three", as well. We recommend a list of four.

3.2. Teaching staff number and status

Some of the Department staff have a good research profile and performance. Some of the research is really visible in top journals. These researchers can attract projects and grants and involve other colleagues and students.

3.3. Synergies of teaching and research

PhD students are involved in the research projects of their supervisors.

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.

GENERAL COMMENTS

3.1. Teaching staff recruitment and development

The implementation of policies to promote and support teaching innovation projects could provide new opportunities to rethink and offer attractive programs. Teachers have a workload of 9 hours per week of teaching assignments. This is a considerable workload and with 3 courses per semester, they are quite tied to instruction especially as much of the preparation and assessment happens outside traditional classes. Considering the situation of the University of Cyprus, the Faculty is burdened. This was a theme brought up in the interview with teachers. It's very difficult to innovate and to upgrade the courses in these conditions. A functioning modern and attractive DL will require even more in preparation and execution. So, the promotion of innovation in budget, hours and recognitions, should improve the program quality.

3.2. Teaching staff number and status

If the University is reorienting its objectives to improve their rankings, it's necessary to support more research activities through more teaching time discharge, sabbaticals, etc.

There are some professors that are involved regularly in research of high quality, others don't. Providing them with time and resources could help. This will improve the reputation of the Department and programmes.

3.3. Synergies of teaching and research

It could be practical to consider requiring teachers to be involved in research activities in recent years to become main PhD supervisor. Research groups are an important part of the training that supervisors can provide to their PhD students, as well as to manage new methodologies, to analyse the research needs of the field, to know the research networks in their topic, etc. This is very difficult to do for a teacher that is not actively involved in recent research. A similar difficulty will appear with publications. PhD students must learn the different ways to communicate their results apart from monographs: in conferences, scientific journals, executive summaries for practitioners, etc. For a teacher that is not currently involved in research, it could be difficult to guide a PhD candidate in these tasks.

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

| Sub-area | | <i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> | | |
|------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | <i>Primary Education BEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences MEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences PhD</i> |
| 3.1 | Teaching staff recruitment and development | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 3.2 | Teaching staff number and status | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 3.3 | Synergies of teaching and research | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |

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

Sub-areas

4.1. Student admission, processes and criteria

4.2. Student progression

4.3. Student recognition

4.4. Student certification

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
 - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
 - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*

- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings

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

Primary Education BEd

Through the onsite visit and the study of the material given to the EEC by the University, it seems that student access policies are implemented consistently. In order to be admitted to the program, the candidates are required to submit the following documents: Completed application form, which they may obtain from the Admissions Department of the University or create themselves, copy of High School Certificate with a grade of at least 15/20 or equivalent qualification of a different grade system, and minimum grade in Greek and Mathematics 15/20. If the candidates do not meet the above criteria, they may take a specific examination for admission to the program. The suggested number of students is 100 per year, however the program statistics they gave us show that there are 32 students, with average admission grade 16.05. For the admission requirements, the level of international students is not assessed. In the bachelor programme of this Department there is no attraction of international students, due to the teaching language that is Greek. Each student receives planning and academic counselling from the academic counsellors, the Head of Department and the Program Coordinator. The academic officer/counsellor assists students in pre-registration and registration, counsels them with regard to the student's schedule and degree requirements, in case they cannot utilise the on-line services. The Head of Department and the Programme Coordinator are the senior faculty members for each program and counsel students in their major area of specialization .

The processes and tools to collect information about student progression are in place. The faculty collects information about each student progress, and it is something manageable because in bachelor programmes there is a small number of student's in each class, so they get more attention from the teachers. There is a constant, direct communication and strong relationships between professors and students, and as the students said, "there voice was sound" and there is equal treatment for all. There are synchronous and asynchronous communication tools to facilitate constant support, such as Moodle, office hours, telephone, emails, virtual communication, and face to face personal meetings. If there are issues with a student, there are appeal processes with external groups to solve the problems, where academic advisors give support and help. Students

are encouraged to seek advice from their advisor and their lecturers. As the students have told us in the meeting, they have constant evaluation from their professors by assignments, group works, projects, case studies, presentations, workshops, quizzes, portfolios and of course the midterm and the final exams, so the teachers can evaluate constantly the students' progression. The workload is doable as the students said, and helpful because they have a lot of kinds of evaluation and not only the exams.

Graduates of the Primary Education program have the opportunity to get employed in a variety of institutions, such as public and private educational institutions, extended school hours, homework clubs, summer camps, hotels (childcare clubs and activity centers), radio and television stations for the production of children's shows, enrichment centres and research centres. Approximately 70% of the graduates are employed the year after their graduation from the Bachelors program. From the statistics they gave to the committee on the onsite visit, it is a truly international university with 400 other university partners, they attract students from 70 plus countries all over the world, there is an European approach for quality assurance of joint degrees and they follow an internationalization strategy, that improves the quality of education, and ensures students' recognition across the country. Nevertheless, the Department of Education as we mention above, does not attract any international students – except Greek, neither do they send students to universities abroad. The DL programme is the clear exception here.

Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content, and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed and the certification of the HEI is accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards.

Education Sciences MEd

In order to be admitted to the MA programme, the candidates are required to submit the following documents: completed application form, Curriculum Vitae, a Bachelor's degree which relates to education (together with a transcript) from an accredited institution of higher education, a short statement (approximately two pages) of personal goals and research interests, English language knowledge. two recommendation letters, preferably from university professors, other documents that might support the application (e.g. articles, books, awards), and also previous teaching experience is an advantage. The admissions process if it's necessary may include interview during which the candidate makes a few minutes to present a topic of his/hers own choice. There is no attraction of international students, due to the teaching language that is Greek. As they mention on the onsite visit, they may attract students from other countries that they are Greek speakers.

The processes and tools to collect information about student progression are in place. Each faculty collects information about each student progress, and it is something manageable because in master programs there is a small number of student's in each class. The University of Nicosia is committed to educational excellence that encompasses inclusive access to higher education, providing an equal-opportunity, open education system that fosters teaching and learning. Students are always at the centre of attention and the University facilitates a student-centred learning environment that promotes active self-learning and imparts life-long learning skills and competences to students. In addition to the support students receive from the faculty and their respective academic department they also receive individual support through various services and departments. These

include among others the Centre for Research and Counselling Services, the Student Affairs Department, Academic Advising and Support Departments. As the students mention, they have immediate feedback from their teachers by the weekly assignments they have to do, which are very useful because they have time to react, face their difficulties and get better. The teachers use the analytics, so they can see who is joining the platforms to read, and they communicate constantly with the students if they face any issue. There are also some tools to collect information about students progression, which are Kahoot, Moodle, Wikis, Mindmaster, which tools show the participation and the improvement of each student. The teachers encourages the students to talk to them if they face any difficulty, “they are there for us” as a student said, by their side, and they stand by their students to guide them find solutions. The workload is demanding but doable as the students said, and helpful because they have a lot of kinds of evaluation and not only the exams. It is manageable if you truly want it, if you work hard and give effort, make planning and be organized.

Regarding job opportunities graduates can be employed: (a) as specialized to the chosen concentration, (b) as members of teaching staff in tertiary education institutions, (c) as leaders in development-assessment programs and policy in the areas of their expertise (d) officers or trainers of the Pedagogical Institute, (e) members of the supervisory personnel of schools and (f) as new hired teachers, mentors (g) to seek administrative position at school level (e.g. Director, Assistant Director) or/and Ministry of Education and Culture (e.g. Inspector). There is cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country. There are joint programmes with Universities of Patras and Peloponnese.

Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content, and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed and the certification of the HEI is accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards.

Education Sciences PhD

In order to be admitted to the PhD programme, the candidates' evaluation and classification criteria are the following: CV quality, and professional or/and research experience, initial training studies in a related field of study and high academic achievement, content of the recommendation letters and report of personal goals and research interests, interview performance, experience in writing scholarly articles and submitting research proposals for funding or prior participation in research programs are considered important additional qualification. Neither this programme attracts students from international countries, due to the teaching language that is Greek.

The University of Nicosia is focused on educational excellence encouraging unimpeded access to higher education and providing equal opportunities for learning in an open educational system which cultivates teaching and learning. Students are the priority and the University facilitates a student-centred educational environment which encourages

active learning and provides students with knowledge and skills which will be useful for the rest of their lives. In addition to support received by their tutors and academic departments, the students have at their disposal individual support from various departments and services of the University. These, amongst others, include the Centre for Therapy, Training and Research (KESY), the Student Welfare Service, and the student's Educational Guidance and Support through the Department of

Education. There is also the annual student progression report that the students use as the programme's handbook, and they arrange meetings with the supervisory committee many times during the semester. The processes and tools to collect information about student progression are in place. The faculty collects information about each student progress, and it is something manageable because in PhD programmes there is a small number of student's in each class (21 total), and the maximum number of students per supervisor is 5. The teachers encourages the students to talk to them if they face any difficulty, "they are there for us" as a student said, by their side, and they stand by their students to guide them find solutions. The workload is demanding but doable as the students said, and helpful because they have a lot of kinds of evaluation and not only the exams. It is manageable if you truly want it, if you work hard and give effort, make planning and be organized.

As far as employability prospects are concerned, PhD students who will successfully complete the program will have the opportunity: To be employed as a faculty members in a higher education institution, to obtain administrative positions within the Ministry of Education (e.g. as an educational consultant, as a school inspector, etc.), to work as senior executives in the Ministry of Education and Culture (e.g. in the Pedagogical Institute or in the Curriculum Development Unit), to work in institutes of higher education, private education establishments, research centres or in educational consulting centres. There is cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country. There are joint programmes with Universities of Patras and Peloponnese.

Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content, and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed and the certification of the HEI is accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards.

Strengths

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

Primary Education BEd

- There is truly support and understanding between students and professors, strong relationships, student centeredness, constant evaluation to see student's progression, and that makes the students very satisfied.
- The students are participating in the department's development strategy and the department's management. Also, there is a student representative, that brings up the students' disagreements or other issues, so the department can implement a relevant policy.

Education Sciences MEd

-The students are really satisfied by their connection with their teachers, the relationship they have, the support and the understanding they receive. They are by the students side from the beginning until the end, to help them succeed.

-When the COVID-19 situation came up, the students took part in a decision making conversation to give their opinions and make suggestions of what tools and procedures they have to follow, to make up for the lost face to face and have the most efficient lessons.

Education Sciences PhD

-The students are really satisfied by their connection with their teachers, the relationship they have, the support and the understanding they receive. They are by the students' side from the beginning until the end, to help them. As a student mentioned, at some period she faced so much pressure that she wanted to drop out, but the help and the support she received from her teachers made her change mind and keep trying to reach her goals. Which she did.

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.

Primary Education BEd

- One recommendation is to find some effective strategies to attract international students and collaborations with abroad universities. It should be a target to attract international student from all over the world, and to admit students from a diversity of academic backgrounds. The realities and practicalities of changing the programme into English and offering it globally need to be considered. So also the option of not having a small local Bed programme in the same city as the public University of Cyprus.

- What admissions criteria will be used if prospective students present certification and documentation obtained from institutions other than Universities within Cyprus and Greece? How are these dealt with? Who deals with foreign qualifications or even foreign students?

Education Sciences MEd

- In the same way as the bachelor programme, the teaching language needs to be international: English, so it can attract international students all over the world.

- The University needs to hear the students' voice, so they need a representative to be known to all the students. The students we talked to, didn't know who their representative was. It's important to have connection and listen to them, so the students need to be made more aware about these procedures.

- One recommendation came up by a student, is to have the opportunity to take more elective courses from other specialization, so they can extend their general knowledge.

-The evaluation for the course and the teachers happens in the end of the semester. This does not allow for rapid response and direct improvement. One recommendation is to gather the same student feedback in the middle of the semester, implement procedures for improvement, and give the same evaluation at the end of the semester to see if the opinion of students has changed. Also feedback is not obligatory, and only 60-70% complete the feedback. This is quite good, but there are ways to make it more representative. These should be considered.

Education Sciences PhD

-A Master Thesis isn't obligatory for the admission criteria, it is just an advantage for those who have done it. Our recommendation is to make it a priority. A PhD is tough enough - with little prior experience of research the task becomes formidable.

-Teaching language needs to be international, so it can attract students all over the world.

- The University needs to hear the students' voice, so they need a representative to be known to all the students. The students we talked to, didn't know who their representative was. It's important to have connection and listen to them, so the students need to be more aware about these procedures.

- One recommendation came up by a graduate PhD student, is to change the accepted percentage of the plagiarism. 30% is too high. The EEC has no other source for this information. A quick check is recommended. Any plagiarism goes against the grain of teaching research practices. Immaterial rights should be a University priority. Besides this, plagiarism is unfair for the students, because some of them try their best, while others don't.

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

| Sub-area | | <i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> | | |
|------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | <i>Primary Education BEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences MEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences PhD</i> |
| 4.1 | Student admission, processes and criteria | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 4.2 | Student progression | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 4.3 | Student recognition | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 4.4 | Student certification | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

5.1. Teaching and Learning resources

5.2. Physical resources

5.3. Human support resources

5.4. Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

Findings

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

Through the onsite visit and the study of the material given to the committee by the University, it seems that some resources are provided for the students needs, for the smooth running of the programme. The teachers try to provide equal opportunities, use modern education, provide special arrangements when needed, give all students the necessary and useful tools and materials, give exceptions and have a close collaboration. The faculty members are informed constantly about the cases every semester and try to be in line with European guidelines, using a manual for students with special needs.

The internal evaluation report reference to how people with disabilities are treated, and further oral explanations were give to the help offered to students with disabilities in carrying out other academic obligations. The University has a policy about how they deal with those situations and students need to be aware of Internal Regulations for Students with Disabilities.

Strengths

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

Strengths for Primary Education BEd

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths for Education Sciences MEd

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths for Education Sciences PhD

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Primary Education BEd

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Education Sciences MEd

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Education Sciences PhD

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

| Sub-area | Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant | | |
|-----------------|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | <i>Primary Education BEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences MEd</i> | <i>Education Sciences PhD</i> |
| | | | |

| | | | | |
|------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 5.1 | Teaching and Learning resources | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 5.2 | Physical resources | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 5.3 | Human support resources | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |
| 5.4 | Student support | Compliant | Compliant | Compliant |

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Sub-areas

6.1. Selection criteria and requirements

6.2. Proposal and dissertation

6.3. Supervision and committees

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
 - *the stages of completion*
 - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
 - *the examinations*
 - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
 - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
 - *the chapters that are contained*
 - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
 - *the minimum word limit*
 - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
 - *regular meetings*

- reports per semester and feedback from supervisors
- support for writing research papers
- participation in conferences
- The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?*

Findings

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

This is a very interesting and well structured PhD targeting highly committed individuals who wish to engage in high level research in the broad area of research. With an ECTS credit weighting of 240, the PhD is clearly designed to ensure that participants have a solid ground in the core competences of Doctoral research – methods, ethics etc- as well as being given an opportunity to engage in original research in a subject area of their choice.

The PhD has an interesting structure that emphasises development in the initial stages followed by more independent engagement at the latter stages. As such, the key assessment point is that of the ‘Colloquium’ which is a transition point from taught to research. There is an impressive range of explanatory material outlining the rationale for this particular structure which is clearly embedded in the twin requirements of research excellence and student wellbeing.

The learning outcomes at programme level demonstrate a programme committed to enabling the development of high level research and professional skills and the assessment methods adopted appeared to confirm this.

The onsite visit confirmed genuine commitment on the part of staff and students to the programme. Students in particular emphasised the supportive and nurturing environment created while at the same time acknowledging the challenges of engaging in such high level research. Staff clearly saw this as a critically important programme and sought to emphasise their commitment to excellence at all levels.

Strengths

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

The Doctoral programme as presented is structured in such a way as to allow it be expressed in a structured ECTS manner. This can be a complex challenge and the Department is to be commended for the manner in which they seek to fit a research programme into this structure.

As is to be expected for a Doctoral programme, the general admissions and progression requirements are supplemented by specific disciplinary requirements. These include:

- Successful completion of undergraduate and postgraduate academic programmes in education or an allied discipline
- Short statement of interest and CV
- Letters of support – preferably from 2 HE professors
- Relevant supporting material

Importantly there is also priority given to those with prior teaching experience.

Faculty identify areas of interest and potential students are invited to apply under these thematic areas. This linking of student applications and admission to the research interests of the academic staff is important.

Support for students across a range of areas :

- Modular
- Structural
- Support forms / admin

The EEC team were very impressed by the high praise offered by the students interviewed for the care and support offered by academic and administrative faculty.

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.

Consideration might be given to the development of alternative pathways. In particular the development of a Professional Doctorate targeted specifically at educational professionals seeking to enhance their knowledge, skills and competences but who are not interested in research or academic careers. These types of programmes are popular internationally and are seen as being an important part of general systemic improvement across all levels of educational provision.

Offering a range of early career supports and pathways. These would include:

- Conference funding
- Creation of research assistant positions allowing Doctoral candidates to
 - Teach
 - Participate in research projects
 - Participate in Faculty and Department structures

The EEC would consider these as important supports for researchers looking to enhance their post graduation employment opportunities. They would also bring the University into line with international practice in the area.

Provision of sabbatical leave and other supports -including teaching buyout, research and teaching assistance etc, for research supervisors. These types of supports are common internationally and allow faculty maintain the currency of their research and research profiles, key elements when seeking to attract high quality students.

Consider developing an English language pathway and / or programme to attract an international student body. This fits with the Departmental mission to ensure growth in both size and reputation. It would also differentiate them from other providers on the island of Cyprus.

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

| Sub-areas | | <i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 6.1 | Selection criteria and requirements | Compliant |
| 6.2 | Proposal and dissertation | Compliant |
| 6.3 | Supervision and committees | Compliant |

D. Conclusions and final remarks


Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks, which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of each programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The EEC is thankful for the trust placed in us. The opportunities to observe and talk with the students, faculty, and staff of the Department have been frank and eye-opening. We have learned a lot.

The present situation of the Department is not unproblematic. Finding a way to attract good students to the programmes, as well as a way to keep them in the programmes till graduation are of the essence. There is also much that is definitely promising. Offering the DL Med but also a Ded programme in English would provide abundant opportunities for student recruitment. This in turn would provide ample opportunities for expansion, further development of the personnel (larger, more varied and more international) and could enhance the visibility and reputation of the Department, the programmes and the University. This would help the University reach its strategic goals. The balance between risks and possibilities is not an easy one, and the EEC fully understands that none of us has had the same circumstances.

Instruction and research of tomorrow will need investments in infrastructure and personnel. The Department is also well placed to provide inspiration for other Faculties at the University and more globally to find new and efficient methods and technology for instruction. Much is changing in instruction and research. With flexibility in how resources are allocated, many innovative solutions are found daily in the Universities around the world.

E. Signatures of the EEC

| Name | Signature |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Patrik Scheinin |  |
| Joe O'Hara | |
| Josefina Sala Roca | |
| Olaf Zawacki-Richter | |
| Rafaelia Ioannou | |

Date: 19.2.2021