Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 19.1.2021

External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: University of Nicosia**

- **Town: Nicosia**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable): School of Education**

- **Department/ Sector: Department of Education**

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

  In Greek:

  Επιστήμες Αγωγής (1,5-2 έτη, 90-120 ECTS, Μάστερ Εξ αποστάσεως)

  In English:

  Master of Educational Science (1,5 years, 90-120 ECTS, Distance Learning)

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

- **Programme's status: Currently Operating**

A. Introduction

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	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:*
    (a) *sub-areas*
    (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
    (c) *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 the 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*

- o *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*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *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*
- o *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:*
  - o *selection criteria*
  - o *intended learning outcomes*
  - o *qualification awarded*
  - o *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - o *pass rates*
  - o *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - o *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - o *key performance indicators*
  - o *profile of the student population*
  - o *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - o *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - o *learning resources and student support available*
  - o *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 considers the external and internal process. The University follows the external regulations and have an 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 provide also their anonymously teacher assessments. Teachers must consider the quality of their teaching activities, including their assessments, when 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. However, the MA and PhD students that participated in the discussion session complained that some students have high levels of overlaps (30%) without any consequence. Nevertheless, as programs like Turnitin, as 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 budget nor recognition time to develop innovative projects. Teachers have some overloads in teaching responsibilities. Even its supposed that their dedication per week doesn't exceed 9 hours, they teach three different subjects every semester and this diversity is very demanding. In the application report, there was mentioned that there was a prize for teaching quality but during the visit we found that was never implemented.

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

The program is subject to a formal institutional approval which involves the Department, Faculty and 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 provided in the different accreditation Applications submitted, this evaluation has been attached.

The study programmes define their objectives, learning outcomes, methodology, assessment strategies, syllabi, course descriptions, teaching staff, etc. Considering the documents, teaching staff and students interviews, the programme seems to be appropriate, lead students to progress continuously and the student's assignments are consistent with the courses' ECTs. Nevertheless, the programs bibliographies are sometime out dated.

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 includes different evidences: exams, presentations, exercises, individual and group works, etc.

In their presentation, the Department reports about 89% of employability rates. But they do not know in which kind of jobs the students are employed.

1.3. Public information

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

But the website doesn't 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 in 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.

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, and in other cases the reasons were the high tuition fees.

During the visit the required data about student feedback was provided. In general, students provide quite impressive assessments of their teachers. 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 university has different international exchange opportunities for students. The Department students participate in exchange programs, but they do not receive students because the classes are taught in Greek. The only exceptions are students from Greece.

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 to check for plagiarism.

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

The pedagogical support to students provides individualized attention and students feel their teachers very supportive and reliable.

The University has specific programs to support students with special needs or counselling support. 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. The programs 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. On the web page, there is a site for School of Education, where the information of the programs is published.

There is also a link to the Department of Education with the information about Faculty members and organization, research and the Education-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 them any problem or to the coordinator any problem and for that they needn't students 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 useful 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 program is not up to date. The updating of the information is a sign of the quality of a program's content.

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 demanded was provided and analysed, but the Quality Commission should periodically collect and analyse data and the possible explanations of the results in order to improve in the future.

The career path of alumni should be studied and more detailed information collected. The entrance to the job market depends on several factors, and good rates also provide more reputation to the University.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	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
2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

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

Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - *among students*
  - *between students and teaching staff*
  - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning 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 e-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

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *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 the 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 e-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.*

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
  - o *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - o *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  - o ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
  - o *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - o *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - o *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - o *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
  - o *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?*
- *How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *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.

The Master of Education Sciences program is offered in a distance learning (DL) mode. The e-learning methodology is described in the "Pedagogical Model for E-Learning" prepared by the e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit (e-PSU) as of November 2019 (https://www.unic.ac.cy/distance-learning/distance-learning-pedagogical-model/). According to this document, DL courses run over 12 weeks during the semester with a maximum of 30 students that are taught by one faculty member. The Learning Management System (LMS) is the open source system Moodle.

In the Pedagogical Model for E-Learning interaction between students and faculty members and among students is emphasised as an important element of the pedagogical approach to online

learning and teaching. Asynchronous as well as synchronous communication is used throughout the courses. Each DL course offers a minimum of 9 hours of synchronous video-conferencing (webinars using Cisco's WebEx system). Feedback is provided on a regular basis during the courses using the communication tools in Moodle as well as self-study questions and quizzes that are automatically graded for immediate feedback. Lecturers are expected to respond to students' questions and postings within 48 hours. Each instructor is allowed to teach a maximum of two courses per semester (max. 60 students) to handle the volume of interaction with their students. In addition, students can participate in non-mandatory face-to-face tutorials offered at study centers in Greece and Cyprus that are recorded and shared on Moodle.

The course modules have a weekly schedule in Moodle that includes relevant information: a summary and synopsis, goals and objectives, intended learning outcomes, a bibliography, supplemental resources, and self-assessment exercises and activities, and self-evaluation exercises.

Each course in completed with a final exam that the students have to take (physically under non-Covid circumstances) at approved exam enters. The result counts 60 % towards the final grade, 40 % are graded based on learning activities (mid-term exams, assignments, online participation, study groups) during the online courses.

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

Learning activities, exercises and projects are designed to promote collaboration among students in which they apply their knowledge to solve complex problems. A variety of digital tools are used to support collaborative online learning. Using weekly topics and assignments in the courses is a good practice in the context of distance learning.

The size of the classes limited to 30 students per section allows the instructors to work in close contact with the students providing the guidance and the encouragement needed especially in distance learning settings.

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.

Synchronous lectures should be offered not too often, emphasis should be placed on asynchronous delivery (e.g. asynchronous discussions in Moodle or (professionally) recorded video-lectures) to provide flexible learning opportunities independent of time and space.

Apart from learning together in the classes, further opportunities for international experiences for the distance learners could be explored. The model of comprehensive virtual internationalization in higher education might be helpful to improve the international experience (see Bruhn, 2020).

Reference:
Bruhn, E. (2020). Virtual Internationalization in Higher Education. wbv Media. https://doi.org/10.3278/6004797w

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Compliant

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

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

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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.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *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:

- *Is the teaching staff qualified to teach in the e-learning programme of study?*
- *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 doesn't have external training seminars, the pedagogical support comes from their partners. The head of the department assists periodically to the classes so that can provide feedback to the teachers.

A good teaching performance, as well as research, is part of the requisites for promotion. Since Nicosia University is a private institution which main funding resources come from tuition fees, teaching staff considers good teaching performance as a requisite to continue being part of the teaching staff.

There is not any innovation policy. So, the innovation initiatives depend on the will of teachers, but is not recognised. Since the students enrol mainly in the DL programs, teachers need to have skills in e-learning tools and platforms.

In the application form doesn't appear any visiting teaching staff. The Greek language that is used in the programmes is the main limitation to attract guest lectures and students. 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 has a PhD. So, they have an appropriate qualification for the MA program.

Considering the number of students, the number of teachers seems quite limited. Nevertheless, the interviewed students and questionnaires report the feel that the time that teachers use to support them are enough. The student number varies each year, so, even the Department teaching staff is limited, the department can hire more teachers when they have a temporal increase in the number of students enrolled (adjunct faculty members).

A full-time teacher typically has 9 hours per week as teaching workload. If they are involved in funded research they can get a reduction 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.

3.3. Synergies of teaching and research
The Department participates in international research projects in collaboration with foreign Universities.

The teaching staff publication is according their expertise and their teaching assignments in the program. Some of the teachers have an excellent research trajectory and others a more irregular research activity and production. The offer of PhD students' positions is linked to the teaching staff research activities and interests. Teachers that do not engage in research for a long period could not have enough research experience to assume 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 hold a PhD. 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 sociality impact.

3.2. Teaching staff number and status

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

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 has and workload of 9 hours per week of teaching assignments. This is a considerable workload and in addition they have 3 courses per semester, considering the situation of other universities. It's very difficult to innovate and to upgrade the courses in these conditions. These was a theme that brought up in the interview with teachers. So, the promotion of the innovation with budged, hours and recognitions, could improve the program quality.

International practice would suggest that not more than around 50 % of the teaching load is done adjunct faculty members.

3.2. Teaching staff number and status

If the University of Nicosia is reorienting their objectives in the direction to improve their positions in the rankings, it's necessary to support more research activities through more teaching time discharge, sabbatical leaves, etc.

There are some professors that are involved regularly in research, but others don't. Providing them with some hours could help to engage in research which will improve the reputation of the Department and programs.

3.3. Synergies of teaching and research

It should be considered requiring teachers to be involved in research activities. Seen how research groups work is an important part of the training that supervisors can provide to their Master and PhD students, as well as to learn new methodologies, to analyse the research needs of the field, to know the research communities in their field, etc. This is very difficult to do for a teacher who is not involved in recent research.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

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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:*
  - o *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - o *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

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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.

In order to be admitted to the MA distance 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 may include interview during which the candidate presents a topic of his/hers own choice. There is no attraction of international students, due to the teaching language that is Greek. Most of the students in the programme of Distance Learning are from Greece. When they were asked why they prefer the Distance Learning master and not the Conventional, most of the students answered that they have a more flexible timetable, because they are employed full time or part time. The DL is ideal for them to keep an equality and balance between their studies and their work.

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 (max. 30). 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 academic 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 receive 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 improve. 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 are tools that 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 experts to the chosen specialization, (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.

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

The students are very 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 succeed.

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 teaching language should be international, 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 more aware about these procedures.

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

-The evaluation for the course and the teachers happens at the end of the semester, so if a problem about teaching for example came up, it can be solute when the semester ends. So one recommendation is to make the same evaluation 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.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	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

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *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 e-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.

There are various units involved in the development of distance learning courses and faculty support: the Pedagogical Support Unit (PSU), the e-Pedagogical Support Unit (e-PSU), the Distance Learning Unit (adminstrative), the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Center (technical training, Software), and the Mediazone Center. The e-PSU works together with faculty members in an instructional design team to develop DL courses, the Distance Learning Unit provides administrative services of DL students and maintains the LMS Moodle, the TEL-Center offers technical training and evaluates new software, and the Mediazone Center produces audio and visual media, animations etc. to complement the learning material in DL courses.

Faculty training, guidance and support to develop and teach distance learning courses is provided by the Pedagogical Support Unit and the e-PSU Unit. They jointly offer a Teaching Certificate Program for faculty members that comprises four modules or levels.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are not widely used in the School of Education.

The TEL Center also provides an early warning system based learning analytics to identify at-risk and under-performing students. Their behaviour is tracked on the Moodle system. Non-participating students are contacted by the Distance Learning Unit to offer help and guidance.

Strengths

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

Students reported that they feel very well supported and are very satisfied with the institutional academic and administrative student support services. The organisational and technical support infrastructure operates in a professional way.

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.

There are no serious issues related to the overall DL course development and student support systems. Here are just a few general recommendations:

It is strange that there are two separate pedagogical support units, one for conventional face-to-face classes and one for distance and e-learning programs (PSU and e-PSU). The university should consider merging these two units, creating a bigger central unit that also includes the TEL services.

Newly hired part-time lecturers (adjunct faculty) should be mandatorily taking the e-PSU faculty online training certificate program if they do not have this kind of qualification or cannot prove otherwise that they possess the required skills and experience to teach online at a distance.

Furthermore, it could be considered to use more open educational resources and textbooks.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

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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*

- o *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.

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

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.

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*
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Not applicable
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Not applicable
6.3	Supervision and committees	Not applicable

7. Additional for joint programmes *(ALL ESG)*

Sub-areas

7.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement
7.2 The joint programme

7.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement

Standards

- *The joint programme is offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems.*
- *The terms and conditions of the joint programme are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:*
  - o *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
  - o *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, including funding, sharing of costs and income, resources for mobility of staff and students*
  - o *Admission and selection procedures for students*
  - o *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
  - o *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*
  - o *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*

7.2 The joint programme

Standards

- *The partner universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes.*
- *The joint programme is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design, delivery and further development of the programme.*
- *Aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated, including a joint syllabus, language policy, as well as an account of the intended added value of the programme.*
- *Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths

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

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.

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*
7.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	Choose answer
7.2	The joint programme	Choose answer

D. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the 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	
Joa O'Hara	
Josefina Sala Roca	
Rafaelia Ioannour	
Olaf Zawacki-Richter	

Date: 19.02.2021