

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response (Joint - E-learning programme of study)

Date: Date

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Frederick University
- **Campus:** -
- **School:**
Education and Social Sciences (Frederick University)
Social Sciences and Humanities (University of Western Macedonia)
- **Department / Sector:**
Education (Frederick University)
Early Childhood Education (University of Western Macedonia)
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme**In Greek:**

Διαπολιτισμικές Σπουδές και η Ελληνική ως 2^η / Ξένη Γλώσσα (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ (MEd), Εξ αποστάσεως, Διαπανεπιστημιακό με το Πανεπιστήμιο Δυτικής Μακεδονίας)

In English:

Intercultural Studies and Greek as 2nd / Foreign Language (3 academic semesters, 90 ECTS, Master (MEd), Distance Learning, Joint with the University of Western Macedonia)

Language(s) of instruction:

Greek

Programme's Status: New

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. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.3.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

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

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

All areas marked as compliant.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1.a Students should be asked to choose at least a certain number of modules from each institution (e.g. at least 1 elective from each institution) so that it remains a truly joint programme. Otherwise they might only choose and attend modules offered from one university

Department's Response:

The Programme ensures that the students gain a truly inter-institutional experience with respect to the course's delivery. Firstly, all compulsory courses are jointly developed and delivered by academics from both institutions, thus ensuring the joint experience. Furthermore, considering the recommendation of the EEC, a student is required to take one of the elective courses or the supervision of his/her Master Thesis from a collaborating university, therefore, ensuring that the interaction that a student will have with one of the collaborating universities will be at least 33%.

The elective programme courses are offered by the Institutions as shown in the list below:

Table 1 Elective Courses

No.	Course Code	Course Name	University
1.	DLINTER505	Democracy, Equity, and Multicultural Education	Frederick University
2.	DLINTER506	National and European Policies for the Integration of Immigrants and Refugees	Frederick University
3.	DLINTER507	Identities and Greek Language in Diaspora-	University of Western Macedonia
4.	DLINTER508	Development of language skills and oral and written speech strategies	University of Western Macedonia
5.	DLINTER509	Assessment: Verification and evaluation criteria for Greek as a 2nd / foreign language	Frederick University
6.	DLINTER510	Applications of Literature and Creative Writing	University of Western Macedonia

1.b Providing current insights (and readings) from the field of intercultural studies could enhance the quality of the programme. There is a lack of staff expertise around intercultural studies.

Department's Response:

The Departments adopts the recommendation of the Committee and a new course in Intercultural Studies has been added (DLINTER503 - Intercultural Theory And Praxis), (please refer to Annex 1, for the course description) and the academic staff has been further enriched in the field of intercultural studies by the recruitment of Prof. Georgios Nikolaou ([CV](#)) (Specialization: Intercultural Pedagogy) and Dr Evanthia Tsaliki ([CV](#)) (Specialization: Intercultural Education) to collaborate in course teaching, seminars delivery as well as to further enrich the research activities and collaborations of the academic staff.

Furthermore, agreements have been made, in order to enrich the programme with their specialized knowledge and expertise, by providing a series of lectures (starting with all the courses of the first semester and continue by the same way with the courses of all the other semesters) in English language in areas relevant with the compulsory programmes of the programme.

Please refer to the tables below:

Table 2 Indicative agreements for lectures

Speaker

Dr Themistokles Aravositas (University of Toronto, Canada) (CV)

Dr Helena Reierstam (Stockholm University, Sweeden) (CV)
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Dr Aurelija Novelskaitė (Vilnius University, Lithuania) (CV)
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Dr Eleni Skourtou (University of Aegean, Greece) (CV)

The emphasis of those lectures is on the enrichment of students' knowledge and experiences of the treatment of similar situations throughout the world and mainly in Europe. They need to understand how the political, philosophical and theoretical framework is implemented based on the differences and the particular characteristics in each case. Therefore, there are indicative main thematic issues for presentation and discussion:

- Intercultural Education in Europe: Policies, practices and trends
- Developing and implementing policies of Intercultural Education
- Plurilingual and Intercultural Education

- Examining intercultural policies in different context: Greece, Cyprus, UK, Sweden, Canada.
- Intercultural Learning and Internationalisation for primary and secondary education.
- The intercultural education through the Curriculum: An interdisciplinary perspective.
- The teaching of a 2nd or a foreign language as a tool for intercultural learning and internationalization.

Throughout the whole program, the emphasis is on the interrelation of theory with practice. Students are in most cases in-service teachers who need to understand how to transfer the theoretical framework into practice in order to overcome the problems and difficulties they face. Therefore, as part of their assignments at the courses and through their thesis are able to work on cases studies on how to adapt their teaching in respect to the aims on intercultural education. The study of examples and experiences on how other education systems are working enrich their repertoire of the policies and actions and they acquire the knowledge and skills to develop and implement actions which can be examined at the level of the schools they are working.

- 1.c The Admission Criteria need to be reviewed. The university should consider ways and means of attracting foreign students given that the programme is taught only in Greek. Suggestion to offer the master also in English. It should also be clear that the target audience comprises immigrants.

Department's Response:

We do appreciate the EEC's suggestion, however this master's degree target audience was mainly meant to be graduates from Education, Philology, Philosophy, Psychology, Social Work fields who will wish to pursue teaching positions in public or private Greek-speaking schools of all degrees (pre-primary, primary, secondary), either be employed in other public services, organisations, institutions and NGOs currently working with multicultural and multilingual communities in Greek-speaking areas, work at refugee structures that offer educational programs, semi-governmental organisations and private companies again in Greek-speaking areas or even pursue postgraduate studies at the doctoral level. It is therefore expected that either Greek native students or Greek-speaking students can attend this master's degree. Thus, this master degree was designed based on the specific characteristics of the aforementioned contexts, part of which is the taught language to be Greek. That being said, we did take into consideration the EEC's previous suggestion and have made proper agreements to provide prospective students the chance to come in contact with academics from other countries,

other institutions with different/complementary perspectives through visiting lectures as part of this master's degree compulsory courses, which will be provided in English. (Please refer to answer 1b, Table 2).

Additionally, as we have underlined at the answer 1b through the different types of assignments, students have the opportunity to study the situation across Europe and to examine them as part of their research in the Cyprus and Greek context. The theory, the philosophy and the policy of intercultural education need to be implemented in practice at primary and secondary teaching context.

1.d A further critical analysis of the sequence of classes may be good to ensure that the offerings respond to the stated objectives both in relation to intercultural studies and to language learning. Alternatively, explicit attention to one focal area (e.g. language learning within the context of intercultural understanding) may be good.

Department's Response:

We have adopted the recommendation by the EEC. A new, **compulsory**, course in intercultural studies (DLINTER503 - Intercultural Theory and Praxis) has been created and the proposed programme structure has been revised. (please refer to Annex 1 for the new course's description and Annex 2 – Programme Structure).

There is a balance of courses between the fields of Intercultural Studies and Teaching Greek as a Second Language as shown below:

Table 3 Balance between Courses

Num	Field of Intercultural Studies	Field of Teaching of Greek as second language
1.	DLINTER501 - Interculturalism and Education/The pedagogical and social dimension	DLINTER502 - Bilingualism and bilingual education. -Teaching methodology of Greek as a 2nd / foreign language
2.	DLINTER503 - Intercultural Theory and Praxis	DLINTER504 - Curricula and Teaching Greek as a Second/ Foreign language
3.	DLINTER505 - Democracy, Equity, and Multicultural Education	DLINTER507 - Identities and Greek Language in Diaspora
4.	DLINTER506 - National and European Policies for the Integration of Immigrants and Refugees	DLINTER508 - Development of language skills and oral and written speech strategies
5.	DLINTER510 - Applications of Literature and Creative Writing	DLINTER509 - Assessment: Verification and evaluation criteria for Greek as a 2nd / foreign language

- 1.e The programme includes interactive activities that could enhance the students' teamwork skills. It may be a good idea to reconsider the character of the synchronous sessions to ensure maximum participation.

Department's Response:

The University gives great emphasis on the online interaction, the use of advanced technologies, the use of data analytics and the integration of innovative and alternative assessment practices mainly for continuous assessment. It also aims to take advantage of the full affordances of the online platform. It acknowledges the need and has been continuously working towards enhancing and updating its processes and educational material. There is a firm intention from the University to move in this direction. Consequently, to further promote the aforementioned, the Centre for Professional and Personal Development has already developed a professional development action plan in regards to the workshops/trainings/courses to be offered during the following academic year. Some of the courses will be considered as mandatory and some others as voluntarily. Some courses will be provided in-house, some others from collaborators/ experts outside university, and some others as MOOCs. An indicative list is given below:

- Course on Instructional Design
- Course on Blended Teaching and Learning
- Workshops focused on the use of LMS and its tools (activities and resources)
- Workshops on the advanced use of LMS (i.e data analytics, use of H5P), other equipment, hybrid classrooms and Virtual Computer Labs
- Training on the use of more advanced tools and pedagogies (i.e. simulations, serious games, augmented and virtual reality, adaptive assessment and e-assessment).
- Trainings on innovative and alternative assessment and feedback methods and tools (within and outside LMS) (adaptive assessment, e-assessment and personalized feedback) (*Note: in order to further enhance the personalized student feedback to students*).
- Workshops on the use of technological web-based tools to enhance the teaching and learning process
- Workshops tailored to the needs of each department
- Workshops on Course Design and Delivery based on the Blended and Distance Learning Pedagogical Framework.
- Workshops on library resources and capacities

- Training on how to use ZOOM (face to face Vs online synchronous Vs hybrid classrooms)
- Training on how to integrate synchronous and asynchronous activities in courses

The Open and Distance Learning Center of the University will continue to pedagogically and technically support the DL instructors in regards to course design and delivery and educational material development. The University would like also to express its commitment that the experiences, skills and knowledge gained through the pandemic will be continued to be employed and infused within the teaching and learning practices. The University Council and the Senate has already established the Committee for the Technological Advancement of the Teaching and Learning Practices. The Committee is responsible to promote and enhance the exploitation of new and emergent technologies in the teaching and learning practice.

1.f The programme aims to attract a vastly diverse audience, ranging from teachers in elementary and secondary schools in Greece and Cyprus to those who wish to teach abroad. Additional specialized courses could be developed in the future that could encourage in-depth study of these various contexts.

Department's Response:

Taking into serious consideration the EEC's above suggestion, we have reformed some of the learning targets of -almost all- the courses included in the structure of the proposed master's degree such as: DLINTER502, DLINTER504, DLINTER 508 and DLINTER509 (please refer to Annex 1 for courses descriptions) to include opportunities of an in-depth study of all these various contexts (primary and secondary schools in Cyprus, Greek, diaspora in the UK, in Russia etc).

1.g To enrich the programme, we recommend inviting visiting professors to give input in particular study units.

Department's Response:

The Departments adopts the recommendation of the Committee. The academic staff has been further enriched by the recruitment of Prof. Georgios Nikolaou ([CV](#)) (Specialization: Intercultural Pedagogy) and Dr Evanthia Tsaliki ([CV](#)) (Specialization: Intercultural Education) to collaborate in course teaching, seminars delivery as well as to further enrich the research activities and collaborations of the academic staff.

Furthermore, agreements have been made, in order to enrich the programme with their specialized knowledge and expertise, by providing a series of lectures (starting with all the courses of the first semester and continue the same process for all the other semesters) in English language in areas relevant with the compulsory programmes of the programme.

Please refer to the tables below:

Table 4 Indicative agreements for lectures

Speaker

Dr Themistokles Aravositas (University of Toronto, Canada) (CV)

Dr Helena Reierstam (Stockholm University, Sweden) (CV)

Dr Aurelija Novelskaitė (Vilnius University, Lithuania) (CV)
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Dr Eleni Skourtou (University of Aegean, Greece) (CV)

As we have previously mentioned the emphasis of those lectures is on the enrichment of students' knowledge and experiences of the treatment of similar situations throughout the world and mainly in Europe. They need to understand how the political, philosophical and theoretical framework is implemented based on the differences and the particular characteristics in each case. Therefore, there are indicative main thematic issues for presentation and discussion:

- Intercultural Education in Europe: Policies, practices and trends
- Developing and implementing policies of Intercultural Education
- Plurilingual and Intercultural Education
- Examining intercultural policies in different context: Greece, Cyprus, UK, Sweden, Canada.
- Intercultural Learning and Internationalisation for primary and secondary education.
- The intercultural education through the Curriculum: An interdisciplinary perspective.
- The teaching of a 2nd or a foreign language as a tool for intercultural learning and internationalization.

2. Student – centered learning, teaching and assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 2.a In the programme, there is room for improvement in the area of in intercultural studies. To prepare students to work as teachers or otherwise in a multicultural society, it is important that the programme addresses the realities of a multicultural society and problems teachers encounter in the multicultural classroom. As interculturalism should not be taught in the abstract, we recommend to link the theory more with the practice. This applies to both the literature, to choose literature that addresses multicultural society and education in a more direct way and to the exercises.

Department's Response:

We have adopted the recommendation made by the EEC and all courses' learning targets, and bibliography have been updated accordingly (please refer to Annex 1). For example, regarding the courses' learning targets new additions have been made that aim the familiarization with the characteristics of the specific context of various multicultural societies as well as promote the examination, application and creation of learning and teaching methods and experiences that embrace change, and more specifically the prevention of xenophobia and racism. As far as bibliography is concerned, recent references have been added from international academic journals such as the Journal for Multicultural Education, Intercultural Education etc. Furthermore, a new module has been added (DLINTER503), which is called Intercultural Theory and Praxis, and its main focus is to bridge the gap between them.

Our students are in most cases in-service teachers who encounter many difficulties at the multicultural classroom. They need to understand the philosophy, the theory and the policy of intercultural education, but at the same time they need relate them with practice. As part of their assignments at different courses they study how other countries implement the policy on the specific domain and they are asked to think about specific problem-based situations at the context of primary and secondary education or examine those specific situations as part of their thesis. We believe that they need to think about authentic everyday school situations in order to transfer knowledge and experiences of other countries, knowledge and theory into practice.

2.b In several modules reference is made to “foreigners”. Hence, people of immigrant origin are consequently addressed as “foreigners” and the problem defined as the integration of “foreigners”. Many people would consider this language as an exclusionary way of addressing the people concerned, it excludes students of immigrant origin as “foreigners”, who are hence not part of the Greek or Cypriot citizenry. Therefore, this language and the perspective on society it reflects appears not to be very compatible with the programme’s ideals of inclusive citizenship and interculturalism and needs to be redressed

Department’s Response:

We have adopted the recommendations made by the EEC and the academic staff has revised the use of language in the courses’ descriptions. Instead of the word ‘foreigners’, ‘otherness’, terms/phrases such as ‘people with migrant/refugee backgrounds’ or ‘heterogeneity’ have been used. Please refer to Annex 1 - Course Descriptions.

2.c Regarding practical training, e-learning offers many opportunities for students to actively engage with the material, yet the modules in this programme still seem to make little use of these e-learning tools. In the description of the modules there is little explanation which tools for interactive learning are used and how. We would recommend that if these tools are used, to make this more explicit in the module descriptions. In fact, materials are mostly based on the recording of the synchronous video sessions. Videoconferencing sessions are too long (2 hours each), even if different strategies are used

Department’s Response:

We would like to thank the Committee for this comment. The suggested information about the use of tools for interactive learning is already included in the syllabus of each course. Within the syllabus it is explained which tools are used and how they are expected to be used. The required information can be also included in Week 0 as a different resource in order to be easily located by the students. A variety of material is provided to the students besides the videoconferencing sessions; however the material can be enhanced and it is part of the continuous improvement and enhancement of the materials provided to students. Additionally, the University follows the guidelines provided by DIPAE in regards to the synchronous sessions with the students. Finally, The Open and Distance Learning of the University will continue to pedagogically and technically support the DL instructors in regards to course design and delivery and educational material development. The University Council and the

Senate has already established the Committee for the Technological Advancement of the Teaching and Learning Practices. The Committee is responsible to promote and enhance the exploitation of new and emergent technologies in the teaching and learning practice.

2.d In general, the teaching methods, as they are described in several of the modules, suggest that they are more focused on the transfer of knowledge than on developing insight and analytical skills and teaching students how to apply knowledge. The terms in the module descriptions often refer to the lower ends of the taxonomy of Bloom. This is not in line with the stated objectives of the programme (and perhaps also not with the way the modules will be taught) and therefore needs to be reformulated.

Department's Response:

We have adopted the recommendations made by the EEC, and all the course descriptions have been updated to better indicate the expected learning outcomes of the courses, referring also to the higher ends of Bloom's taxonomy. Please refer to Annex 1 - Course Descriptions.

2.e Although students are expected to take an active role in creating the e-learning process, and their sense of autonomy is encouraged, most of the teaching activities are synchronous, so this limits the flexibility and also the capacity of the students' self-regulation. Interaction between students and teachers seems to be monitored, but interaction among students and between students and study materials should be reinforced.

Department's Response:

The Distance Learning Pedagogical Framework calls asynchronous interactive activities among the students, between the students and the instructor and between the students and the content. Additionally, the students are provided with readings and educational material to study as part of the self-study and self-education approach. The instructors are expected to have at minimum 2 interactive activities that are graded as well as weekly interactive collaborative activities. We would like to thank the Committee for this comment, since it is aligned with the goals of the University to further promote and enhance interactivity, collaboration and self-regulation in learning. Specifically, the University gives great emphasis on the online interaction, and the use of advanced technologies aiming to take advantage of the full affordances of the online platform. It acknowledges the need and has been continuously working towards enhancing and updating its processes and educational material. There

is a firm intention from the University to move in this direction. Consequently, to further promote the aforementioned, the Centre for Professional and Personal Development has already developed a professional development action plan in regards to the workshops/trainings/courses to be offered during the following academic year. Some of the courses will be considered as mandatory and some others as voluntarily. Some courses will be provided in-house, some others from collaborators/experts outside university, and some others as MOOCs. An indicative has been previously provided. The Open and Distance Learning Center of the University will continue to pedagogically and technically support the DL instructors in regards to course design and delivery and educational material development. The University Council and the Senate has already established the Committee for the Technological Advancement of the Teaching and Learning Practices. The Committee is responsible to promote and enhance the exploitation of new and emergent technologies in the teaching and learning practice.

2.f The programme could be made more practice-oriented. If, as we were told, most prospective students will have a philosophical background, we believe that these students with no previous experience with research need some practical exercise in using research tools, like the coding of an interview in Atlas-ti (or any other programme) or work with SPSS before they start their dissertation. The programme could be made more practice-oriented. If, as we were told, most prospective students will have a philosophical background, we believe that these students with no previous experience with research need some practical exercise in using research tools, like the coding of an interview in Atlas-ti (or any other programme) or work with SPSS before they start their dissertation.

Department's Response:

We accept and adopt the recommendation of the EEC. The course DLINTER511 - Research Methodology and Proposal Preparation, has been updated to further indicate the practical applications of research tools, such as SPSS, Atlas-ti in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

2.g Reading lists should be updated as the literature in some of the modules seemed rather old

Department's Response:

We have adopted the recommendations made by the EEC, and all bibliography has been amended. Please refer to Annex 1 - Course Descriptions.

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

All areas marked as compliant.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

3.a There is an imbalance in that the expertise in teaching Greek as a second language is stronger than the expertise in intercultural studies. This is understandable as none of the current staff members has a background in social sciences with an expertise in multicultural society or in intercultural education. We would recommend therefore, that if new staff is hired, to recruit staff that has that expertise. A temporary solution is to hire visiting professors with this expertise. We recommend these visiting professors to be widely deployed in all modules (and to teach in English), as interculturalism is a basic attitude that should be propagated in all modules.

Department's Response:

Please refer to previous answer 1b.

3.b Recognised visiting professors (who teach in English) should be built into the programme, preferably in the form of guest lectures in all the existing modules. Alternatively, one additional elective could be set up that has mainly or exclusively guest lecturers. However, if this is an elective, students might not choose it and therefore not be exposed to English-speaking guest lecturers which is why it may be most beneficial to deploy visiting staff across existing modules.

Department's Response:

Please refer to previous answer 1b (Table 2).

3.c Few staff are carrying out research into online education or are generally specialized in online education. Any new hire should therefore be able to fill this gap.

Department's Response:

The University is expanding the team that supports Distance Learning Operations at the University by hiring more people specialized in open, distance, blended and flexible learning environments.

3.d Staff should be encouraged to publish more in English, particularly in relevant high-impact international journals that are in English.

Department's Response:

We fully acknowledge the importance of publishing in English, and especially in high-impact international journals. As per the Strategic goal of the University Scopus indexed publications are required by all academic members.

The University has taken actions to support and encourage the academic staff to publish more in English international journals by setting various provisions such as:

a) Publication boosting scheme:

As per the 104th Council Decision of the University, the University financially supports publications in high-impact international journals in order to promote and strengthen its research culture.

b) PhD promotion scheme and TRA employment

Incentives have been also provided to PhD students, but providing 90% scholarship for their studies, require Scopus indexed publications, at least one such conference or paper, as part of their PhD defence and financially support Scopus-indexed journal publications.

Additionally, the University has approved budget for Teaching and Research Assistants to faculty so as to support not only the educational process but also assist in research production

c) Teaching load reduction scheme:

The University's teaching load reduction scheme is applied in the case of faculty who are engaged in research activities, participate in research projects or supervise PhD students. This scheme releases time for faculty to develop their research agenda and build up their research output. Furthermore, the Department's decision to proceed with the recruitment of visiting faculty to strengthen programs' development and delivery, contributes to the teaching load reduction of resident faculty and further concentration on their research activities

d) *Internal Funding:*

The University opportunities for internal funding to encourage faculty members that require financial assistance to develop their research ideas. Notably, faculty members can take advantage of the decision taken by the Senate in Fall 2020 to fund competitive research proposals. The Senate has allocated a portion of the University's Research Fund to an internal funding scheme through which members of staff can apply for internal small-scale financial support. The call was announced in January 2021 and several faculty members submitted proposals in their field of expertise

Furthermore, as per their research strategic goals, the Departments offers guidance and sets targets for its faculty members that relate to key performance indicators (KPIs) in the following:

- The number of publications as listed in Scopus
- High impact (quality) publications as measured by SJR index in Scopus
- Submitted funding proposals & funding
- h-index (measured in Scopus)
- Citations (measured in Scopus)
- PhD supervision (Number of students)

The Department has measured and assessed all KPIs listed above for each faculty member and has set overall targets in each KPI for a horizon of 3 years. These KPIs and each faculty member's contribution is evaluated every year against these targets. Specifically relating to publications, faculty members are expected to contribute to the research output of the Department with a focus on Scopus ranked publications. In order to provide merit for high quality research output, the Department measures high rank publications for each faculty member based on SJR with high impact publications considered when a rating $SJR \geq 1$. The $SJR \geq 1$ appears highly correlated with other international rankings.



4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

(ESG 1.4)

All areas marked as compliant.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

4.a None.

Department's Response:

We would like to thank the EEC for their positive remarks.

5. Learning resources and student support

(ESG 1.6)

All areas marked as compliant.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

5.a The virtual learning environment offers opportunities for further interaction in online courses. However, we have not seen examples of innovative use of technology such as computer simulations, virtual or augmented reality embedded in the programme online environment.

Department's Response:

The University gives great emphasis on the online interaction, the use of advanced technologies, the use of data analytics and the integration of innovative and alternative assessment practices mainly for continuous assessment. It also aims to take advantage of the full affordances of the online platform. It acknowledges the need and has been continuously working towards enhancing and updating its processes and educational material. There is a firm intention from the University to move in this direction. Consequently, to further promote the aforementioned, the Centre for Professional and Personal Development has already developed a professional development action plan in regards to the workshops/trainings/courses to be offered during the following academic year. Some of these workshops focus on the use of more advanced tools and pedagogies (i.e. simulations, serious games, augmented and virtual reality, adaptive assessment and e-assessment). Along with the trainings, the Open and Distance Learning Centre of the University will continue to pedagogically and technically support the DL instructors in regards to course design and delivery and educational material development.

More specifically, at the following courses the following simulations, virtual and augmented reality applications were integrated in order to further promote the use of innovative technologies and applications. Examples are provided below:

In the course DLEDA052 - Effective and Successful School Leadership, the following simulation application is integrated in order to engage students in real-life classroom situations. The simulation is used for weekly activities as well as for graded assignments:

Simulations for School Leaders and Teachers

<https://schoolsims.com/>

In the course DLEDA061 - Team Leadership in Education, there are two serious games applications that are integrated within weekly activities and graded assignments. These are:

The Pacific, which is a serious game on leadership and team management

<https://www.game-learn.com/game-based-learning-corporate-training/serious-game-in-leadership-and-team-management/>

and the Merchants, which is a serious game on negotiation and conflict resolution (<https://www.game-learn.com/game-based-learning-corporate-training/serious-game-negotiation-and-conflict-resolution/>)

Finally, in the course DLEDA064 – Teaching, Learning and Evaluation the following simulation application is integrated in order to engage students in real-life classroom situations. The simulation is used for weekly activities as well as for graded assignments:

<https://www.simschool.org/home/simschool/>

5.b We recommend that there is a clear student-facing narrative on how the learning environment of the conventional programme integrates online components so that students truly benefit from the online learning environment.

Department's Response:

As of blended learning approaches, conventional courses are enhanced with some online activities. The courses already use the tools and different opportunities for online interaction on the Moodle platform. Specifically, the University would like also to express its commitment that the experiences, skills and knowledge gained through the pandemic will be continued to be employed and infused within the conventional programmes of study. The University has already developed and implemented a Blended Learning Pedagogical Framework (BLPF) according to the guidelines provided by the regulatory authorities. Additionally, best practices and good examples from the distance learning programmes of study are used to infuse in-classroom teaching and learning practices. The University Council and the Senate has already established the Committee for the Technological Advancement of the Teaching and Learning Practices. The Committee is responsible to promote and enhance the exploitation of new and emergent technologies in the teaching and learning practice according to the BLPF.

5.c Digital learning materials are poorly developed. We have not seen examples of materials that become fundamental in the different courses. Most of the materials are recorded video-lectures from the teachers without developing the actual potential of have an important bulk of digital learning resources further PDF files or e-books.

Department's Response:

The University gives great emphasis on the online interaction, the use of advanced technologies, the use of data analytics and the integration of innovative and alternative assessment practices mainly for continuous assessment. It also aims to take advantage of the full affordances of the online platform. It acknowledges the need and has been continuously working towards enhancing and updating its processes and educational material. There is a firm intention from the University to move in this direction. This consists of two main actions.

The first relates to the strengthening of the technical support environment so that academics can be better supported for materializing their designs of digital content and for ensuring that technical standards are upheld. The Open and Distance Learning Centre of the University will continue to pedagogically and technically support the DL instructors in regards to course design and delivery and educational material development. The University would like also to express its commitment that the experiences, skills and knowledge gained through the pandemic will be continued to be employed and infused within the teaching and learning practices. The University Council and the Senate has already established the Committee for the Technological Advancement of the Teaching and Learning Practices. The Committee is responsible to promote and enhance the exploitation of new and emergent technologies in the teaching and learning practice.

The second direction relates to the further strengthening of training and education of faculty to contemporary distance learning practices. The Centre for Professional and Personal Development has already developed a professional development action plan in regards to the trainings to be offered during the following academic year. These workshops will cover advanced concepts such as the use of gamification and simulation in distance learning, designing interactive distance learning material, digital learning material construction techniques.

5.d Consideration should be given to split the programme revenues 50-50 a priori rather than allowing total flexibility so that the split could in reality also be 80-20 between the two institutions. Each institution should supervise roughly half the students and each institution should roughly contribute the same number of modules/courses to the programme.

Department's Response:

The agreement stipulates that the revenues are split pro-rata. It is also noted that all operational overheads are equally split 50-50 between the partners, as per the EECs recommendation, irrespective of the actual pro-rata undertaking, therefore addressing the risks of creation of challenges between the institutions. Furthermore, as per the EEC's recommendation, there is a guaranteed assumption of educational responsibilities which in effect is close to parity, thus ensuring the equal standing of the collaborating universities in the joint program. The only activity that is undertaken by one institution is that of the administrative support services for the program. In line with other joint programs, administration is undertaken by one institution so as to provide clarity and avoid confusion and unnecessary red tape for the students.

6. Eligibility (Joint programme)

(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

6.a The division of responsibilities at all levels (curricular, financial, service-related, administrative and so forth) is for the most part transparent, although it seems that it is not split equally among partners. A recommendation by the ECE is for the two partners to re-examine the specifics of the class offerings and to work on allocations of both teaching and advising/these supervising duties.

Department's Response:

As described before (answer 5d), the EEC's comments have been addressed and a balance of load between the institutions is guaranteed at academic level as well as financial. The class offerings allocation has also been addressed to the EEC's recommendations.

6.b A related strong recommendation is for the partners to create an additional detailed Memorandum of Understanding in which the roles are clearly delineated. Anticipating the projected growth of the programme, such an agreement can ensure that possible challenges are avoided in the future. This recommendation is in relation to curricular/teaching dimensions and allocation of funds

Department's Response:

Indeed, the two institutions have proceeded with the establishment of an MOU that dictates the roles and responsibilities of the joint operation of the program. The MOU will be updated accordingly once the suggestions in the current response are accepted by the CYQAA.

6.c While the grounding of language learning in intercultural studies is a welcomed component of the proposed degree, there is only one required class that focuses on intercultural studies. Given the proposed centrality of intercultural studies in the rationale for the programme creation, a recommendation would be to reconsider either the title of the degree or to re-balance the class offerings. Such work could enhance the added value of the joint programme.

Department's Response:

We have adopted the EEC recommendation and a new compulsory course in intercultural studies has been created. Also refer to answer 1b and Annex 1 - Course Descriptions. Please refer to answer 1d (Table 3 – Balance between Courses).

6.d The two partners may consider working collectively to construct what they perceive to be the added value of this programme. A comparison with existing degrees in this area may be necessary for that to occur. Such work could help with advertising and recruitment efforts and the success of the programme in the long run.

Department's Response:

The members of the two scientific teams of Frederick University and Western Macedonia have known each other from their various meetings at scientific conferences and have collaborated in joint scientific publications. They have found that the geographic regions in which the two Universities operate have several common features (large number of refugees and immigrants, who need and/or choose to learn Greek as a second or foreign language) thus they can share common experiences and join their forces to make a modern and attractive program concerning teaching Greek as a L2.

The collaborating Departments have in their undergraduate program courses in Greek language and linguistics, courses concerning the management of refugee and migration flows in the light of a modern intercultural premise, as well as courses on teaching Greek as a mother tongue or second / foreign language.

The two Universities are relatively newly established and need empowering collaborations, extroversion, and internationalization. The proposed program greatly contributes to these goals, The Universities have signed for some years a memorandum of collaboration in all areas of their joint actions and interests. The issue of this collaboration, after being agreed at the level of the two Institutions, was raised and approved by the Councils of the collaborating Departments, the

Department of Education of Frederick University, and the Department of Preschool Education of University of Western Macedonia. Subsequently, three-member committees were formed in the two Departments, under the supervision of a coordinator from each Institution. These three committees moderated the two scientific committees in the elaboration of the program and the compilation of the outlines and study guides of the courses. These texts were approved by the Assemblies of the Departments and were forwarded for inspection and approval by the Quality Assurance Units (MODIP for Western Macedonia) and the Senators of the two Institutions. Subsequently, the University of Western Macedonia sent the decision of cooperation and establishment of the specific postgraduate for publication in the Government Gazette (FEK), as required by Greek law.

Before finalising on this master's degree structure we reviewed relevant master degrees already offered in Cyprus, Greece and abroad. The following innovations are characteristic to this proposed master program:

- It is the only program that combines Cross-cultural studies with the Teaching and Learning of Greek as a second/foreign language.
- It is the only program that focuses on various contexts where language is taught, with a special focus on Greek speaking diaspora communities in countries outside Greece and Cyprus.

These, along with the fact that this is a joint program between two universities located in two different countries with visiting lectures from other universities and countries, increases the number of perspectives shown and are able to shape this program's orientation.

7. Conclusions and final remarks

The MEd in Intercultural studies and Greek as a Second/Foreign Language is a Distance Learning programme between Frederick University & University of Western Macedonia is a strong programme and of strategic importance for both universities. Both have a similar vision for internationalization. Both countries have similar needs to address the presence of refugees and immigrants, the issue of language and common culture between the two countries.

There are **good research and teaching collaborations** between the two universities. Students receive their grades using Frederick University grades (numerical grading) as Frederic University is the administrative hub institution where students apply to. Other benefits of this joint venture include: to further develop research collaborations between the two institutions. Policies and processes at Frederick University apply - even if a module is led or taught by University of Western Macedonian staff.

Past and present students are very positive about the university, they talked about active interaction with the teachers, online course a good opportunity for those who cannot travel (gives them an opportunity to connect with their homeland). Staff are very responsive to student emails and requests and there is a great deal of guidance and support.

Cross-cultural teaching and learning is key to this joint programme. It is in Greek because the Greek and Greek Cypriot diaspora is one of the main target groups of this programme (there are approximately 1 million Greeks in Russian territories) and they need to improve their Greek language proficiency which is often underdeveloped. While the EEC understands this rationale, we would nonetheless encourage all stakeholders to be more outward-looking and to develop further collaboration with external stakeholders and external expertise (e.g. visiting professors).

Overall, we were satisfied with how the two universities have organized and monitored their educational programmes. Our impression is that both institutions are well organized and that the staff of both universities are very dedicated and committed to their students. The joint programme corresponds with the EQF and is compliant in most areas of evaluation. Nonetheless, several sub areas need improvement. We invite both institutions to respond to the recommendations in this evaluation report.

Department's Response:

Firstly, we would like to sincerely thank the External Evaluation Committee for their hard work, the constructive discussions held during the virtual visit, and the valuable recommendations made for improving our proposed program. In relation to the recommendations made by the EEC, we believe we have taken the necessary actions and have fully adopted them, as evident from our responses in sections 1 to 6 of this response. We are looking forward to the positive decision by the Cyprus QAA and are eager to commence running the program from the coming academic year.



B. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. George Demosthenous	Rector	

