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

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Doc. 300.1.1/4

Date: 14.04.2022

External Evaluation Report
(Joint - E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  University of Nicosia (Cyprus)
- **Collaborative Institution(s):**
  University of Nicosia (Cyprus) & University of Patras (Greece)
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Education / Humanities and Social Sciences
- **Department/ Sector:** Education / Department of Education Sciences Preschool Education
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
  In Greek:
  Διαπολιτισμική Εκπαίδευση και Διαμεσολάβηση (2 έτη, 120 ECTS, Μάστερ, Εξ Αποστάσεως, Διαπανεπιστημιακό πρόγραμμα σπουδών με το Πανεπιστήμιο της Πάτρας)
  In English:
  Intercultural Education and Mediation (2 years, 120 ECTS, Master in Education, E-Learning, Joint programme with the University of Patras)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):**
  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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A. Introduction
This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The visit took place on Friday 8th April 2022 and was conducted via zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prior to the remote meetings, the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) studied the Application for Evaluation, along with the eight annexes (including list of compulsory and elective modules, module descriptors, detailed biographical notes, study guides, university policies, and distance learning pedagogical model).

The EEC met with the Rectors - Heads of the Institutions and the Vice Rectors of Academic Affairs, the Internal Evaluation Committee, the Heads of the relevant departments and the two programme co-ordinators, the Head/Coordinator and members of the E-Learning Unit, members of the programme coordination committee, teaching staff on each course, students and graduates of other programmes at the University of Nicosia, and administrative staff.

Our overall impression of the visit was excellent. The evaluation was conducted in a professional manner including power point presentations and thorough discussions with all stakeholders.

There are 5 key characteristics of this programme worth noting:

(a) New programme
(b) Joint programme due to start in September 2022
(c) Delivered fully online via an e-learning platform
(d) All modules are planned to be delivered entirely in Greek
(e) Master's degree consisting of 120 ECTS (2 years) with a 30 ECTS practicum component.

This is the second joint programme between the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras, following a joint masters in Special Education (Distance Learning).

The University of Nicosia has a strong international presence, with over 14,000 students from over 100 countries, 279 full-time faculty staff, 6 schools with 20 departments,Times Higher Education Top 800 ranking, and is very experienced in joint degree programmes. The University of Patras has 700 faculty, nearly 31,000 UG and 2,000 PG students, and 2,000 PhDs, 7 schools with 35 departments, it has a growing number of collaborations with China and strong links to Nicosia.

The following sections highlight the strengths and areas for improvement of the programme under the headings: (1) Study programme and study programme's design and development; (2) Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment; (3) Teaching staff; (4) Student admission, progression, recognition and certification; (5) learning resources and student support; and (6) eligibility.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Professor Daniel Faas	Chair	Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
Professor Eleni Oikonomidoy	Member	University of Nevada at Reno, USA
Professor Sawitri Saharso	Member	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands
Professor Albert Sangrà Morer	Member	Open University of Catalonia, Spain
Victoria Michaelidou	Member (Student)	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?*

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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 MEd in Intercultural Education and Mediation is a distance learning joint programme between the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras with face-to-face practicum. The duration of the programme is 2 years and is developed around 120 ECTS. A Quality Assurance Policy is in place. There are several quality assurance mechanisms and formal policies in place for the development, management and review of the programme of study. Teaching staff and administrative staff are assigned with the responsibilities of quality assurance. Students are also encouraged to review each study unit through an online student questionnaire at the end of each semester. The programme ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud, guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against students or staff.

This programme is well designed and organised in so far as it is well structured, and in accordance with the strategy and purposes of the institutions. The programme is designed round compulsory courses of 30 ECTS; the opportunity to choose elective courses of 60 ECTS; the face-to-face practical training of 30 ECTS and the optional allocation of 30 ECTS for conducting a postgraduate thesis and get exempted from three specialization elective courses. This programme of studies 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. An on-going monitoring and review model is in place.

The programme of study presents clear, accurate, up to date and readily accessible information that is published. The objectives, intended learning outcomes, qualification award, teaching and learning assessment procedures are clearly articulated and presented. The admission requirements are also well described and appropriate.

The Application and the complementary documents describe key indicators that provide knowledge of the programme and its various components. Regarding the student profile, the Application together with the online visit gives us a (general) picture of the future student group and how they are supposed to complete the courses. However, it may be worth noting that the programme has not been running yet. The same applies to student satisfaction, learning resources, and to career opportunities, both during and after the programme has been completed.

Strengths

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

1. The quality assurance processes, structures, and regulations are transparent and appropriate. Programme collaborators expressed a desire to engage ongoing review, guided by critical reflection.

2. The design of the programme and the processes planned for on-going monitoring and review are comprehensive. The sequence of courses is purposeful and coherent.

3. A collaborative spirit among the various collaborators is transparent.

4. The placement opportunities are meaningful. The existing collaborations facilitate diverse placement opportunities that are based on student interests.

5. The placements opportunities beyond the formal educational sector are innovative and responds to current societal needs.

6. The quality assurance methods for verification of student identities are appropriate.

7. The student workload is appropriate for the ECTS that they receive.

8. The structure of the programme follows the European Credit Transfer System.

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.

1. Given that the programme has the ambitious goal to educate teachers and related professionals outside of the formal world of schools, specialized classes could be developed in the future that target more clearly the different professional contexts and audiences.

2. While the diverse placement opportunities are welcomed and the practicum expectations are clearly communicated, as the programme grows, quality assurance processes could be considered in selecting the institutions for field placements and in training the field supervisors.

3. Since this is a new programme, further work in integrating the curriculum between the two institutions may be good to ensure smooth transitions and a cohesive framework.

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

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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:*
    - o *among students*
    - o *between students and teaching staff*
    - o *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:*
    - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
    - *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)*
    - ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
    - *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
    - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
    - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
    - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
    - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

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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.

Due to the influx of refugees and other immigrants in Greece and Cyprus Greek and Cypriot society are becoming more multicultural. The rationale of this Master program is that as unfortunately diversity is often accompanied by tensions between social groups, there is a need for professionals who can promote intercultural dialogue and for professional intercultural mediators. Also, the classroom population will be more culturally diverse. Education has as a task to prepare all pupils, including native ones, for equal citizenship in a multicultural Greek and Cypriot society. This requires that teachers are equipped for teaching in culturally mixed classrooms. Only then can education offer all pupils equal educational opportunities. The e-learning modality becomes appropriate to run the programme, especially considering most of the

students will be in two different countries, Greece and Cyprus. The online nature of the programme will enable communication and collaboration in the learning process between people who will be living in different countries, so intercultural issues will be able to be approach in a very practical context.

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

1. The programme addresses topical issues in real-life situations both in society, like anti-immigrant sentiments, and in the multicultural classroom.

2. Students are invited to reflect on how they could act in such situations by role play and by letting them experience these situations in real-life settings, which is made possible because of the collaboration with societal stakeholders.

3. It is also evident from the design and wording of the programme that it rejects a pathologizing approach to children of immigrant origin and their parents, and that it aims to include them and give them a voice by inviting students to share their biographies through practices of story-telling.

4. At the same time, the programme is not afraid to address contested social issues, like moral conflict about differing ideas about gender equality or homosexuality.

5. Although the programme has not started yet, there are a myriad of diverse types of activities that are foreseen to be carried out in the online setting, making a a quality online learning environment possible.

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.

1. It is an ambitious programme that aims to address both issues related to multicultural society and teaching in the multicultural classroom. Yet, the latter has its particular pedagogical challenges and requires specific knowledge, skills and tools, i.e. intercultural education. In some parts, the balance tended to be too much towards the general and too little towards the specific educational. Finding the right balance is a point to pay attention to in the further implementation of the programme.

2. In other respects the quality of the programme ultimately stands or falls with how the plans will be worked out. The success of the narrative approach for instance, to bring in students' life worlds through narratives, is dependent on the teacher's ability to create safe spaces for vulnerable pupils. It is promising, however, that in several places this is recognized by the designers of the programme.

3. If one wants to teach about subjects like gender equality and sexuality in the multicultural classroom it is impossible not to be critical of some aspects of the culture of pupils of immigrant origin. Yet, this risks that pupils of immigrant origin feel being stigmatized and their cultural

background not respected. This makes teaching sex education in the multicultural classroom one of the most challenging things to do and requires specific competencies in intercultural mediation. We find it encouraging that the program contains practical activities to exercise these competencies.

4. Culture is a central concept in a programme on intercultural education and mediation. In several courses Hofstede's model is used. We were told that Hofstede's model was only meant as a start, but if the intention is to teach students a dynamic conception of cultures, as evolving, and as internally divided, with dissident voices, then Hofstede is not a lucky choice, as his model represents cultures as static, closed national systems. There are alternatives (e.g. Phillips, A. (2009) *Multiculturalism without culture*. Princeton University Press).

5. The analysis of the study guides results in some uneven balance of the appropriate activities for fostering interaction and collaboration in online learning environments. Once the programme starts, particular attention has to be paid to this balance, guaranteeing similar possibilities in all the different courses.

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-centered teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Compliant

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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.*

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- *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.

The teaching staff are very committed to the new joint programme. They have plenty of expertise in the area of intercultural studies and digital learning. Staff receive 3-6 hours research time release per term to work on their own research projects. Most staff at the University of Nicosia are granted this research time release. There is a big volume of research at Nicosia related to this MEd degree. Staff teach 2 courses per semester at both the University of Nicosia and Patras which is a good balance with research and administrative tasks.

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

1. There is a very good balance between junior and senior staff in the participating departments at both universities. The number of staff is currently entirely adequate to support the programme of study.

2. Research-led teaching is being practiced which ensures the students are being taught the latest findings from the research staff carry out. The synergies of teaching and research are very good.

3. Students assess each course every semester. Content, facilities, distance learning, teachers, teaching material are being assessed by the students. Staff receive the feedback anonymously. At

the end of term a summary of the assessment is given to staff. There is also a self-assessment option at Nicosia.

4. The pedagogical unit at Nicosia offers continuous professional development (CPD) courses for staff. All staff must be literate using the e-learning platform. Every year there is a schedule of CPD courses that staff can avail of. At Patras, there is a similar offering.

5. Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the core and elective courses offered on this joint MEd programme.

6. A distinguished guest seminar series is offered at the University of Nicosia. There are also plans to co-host synchronous sessions with external visitors (subtitled). Staff are open to including visiting professors from abroad.

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.

1. 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. It is good to have a distinguished guest seminar series but all students should be more systematically exposed to (English-speaking) guest lecturers and to international senior professors in the subject matter.

2. Although staff must be literate using the e-learning platform, no online teaching skills or experience are required in the selection of the teachers. A stronger approach on the methodological approaches on online teaching and learning would be recommendable.

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

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

Sub-areas

4.1 **Student admission, processes and criteria**
4.2 **Student progression**
4.3 **Student recognition**
4.4 **Student certification**

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

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

4.2 Student progression

Standards

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

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

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

4.4 Student certification

Standards

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

> - *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*
>
> *You may also consider the following questions:*
>
> - *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
> - *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
> - *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings

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

The admission criteria are in place. The MEd aims to attract Cypriot or Greek students that must demonstrate a good command of the Greek language and require an undergraduate degree from an accredited institution of higher education while previous teaching experience is considered as advantage. Through the remote visit, together with the study of the material provided, it seems that student access policies are implemented consistently. Students' degrees/background are taken into consideration for admission (transcript required). Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently. Regulations regarding student progression are in place. The processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information pertinent to student progression exist. 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. The Application presents a detailed approach to the Accreditation of Prior Learning. Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on: the institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention; cooperation with other institutions and quality assurance agencies. Information and published regulations related to student certification are in place. Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, the level, content and status of studies that were pursued and successfully completed. Student-centredness is a key tenet of the University's espoused culture and principles, making sure that students' individual needs are seriously addressed.

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

1. The University's electronic system seems to work well and so according to the different stakeholders interviewed, namely students, teaching staff and administrators. These monitoring processes are in place to address students' progress, requests and/or concerns of both students and staff.
2. There is a clear explanation of the different courses available and how they operate, whether a student is full-time or part-time when following the distance learning programme.
3. Students believe that the admission requirements to enrol in a program are appropriate, they feel prepared and supported enough by the administrative staff throughout this process.
4. Students state that are being adequate supported and advised by the teaching staff and by the administrative staff.
5. The student's workload is balanced. The students mentioned that they manage to address all the requirements of the course.
6. Students are adequately informed about the online services available to them (E-Learning facilities/computer labs/library support, student career services/alumni services, 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.

None.

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.

Overall, the programme is well structured with sufficient attention to detail in terms of learning and teaching resources with a variety of tools and approaches used as the course unfolds. We assume that provision for student support will be in place. Feedback from the student was very positive with tutor support identified as the best feature of the course. However, the teaching and administrative staff will need to engage in a different manner to ensure that good levels of support exist as the engagement required for a DL programme will be different.

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

1. The material that we were shown is of the distance learning programme that is about to being accredited for the first time. We do feel that most of the samples viewed showed a didactic approach to teaching with engagement with the students as active participants. The documentation highlights that there is a lot of interaction taking place.

2. There are some established mechanisms and technologies that support interaction between staff and students, mainly through online platform and the use of computer mediated communication.

3. The library offers both hard and electronic copies of academic texts and research literature. We were not able to visit the University consequently we did not manage to have a hands-on experience of assessing the full extent of the physical resources and the teaching materials available to support the programme. From discussions we had with the Programme Team and the Administrative staff, and the documentation that we were shown, it appears that these seem to be adequate. Although, the majority of the resources given to students are in Greek.

4. Academic staff are either permanent professors or adjunct staff. The number of administrative staff appears to be adequate for delivery of this programme.

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.

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

2. The EEC recommends that there is a clear student facing narrative on how the learning environment integrates online components so that students truly benefit from the online learning environment.

3. There is a need for providing more international literature (i.e. academic articles, books, etc) to students instead of Greek papers.

4. An initial induction session or course on how to study and take advantage of the students' effort in an online setting would be of valuable added value for the students.

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

6. Eligibility *(ALL ESG)*

Sub-areas

   6.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement
   6.2 The joint programme
   6.3 Added value of the joint programme

6.1 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:*
    - *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
    - *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*
    - *Admission and selection procedures for students*
    - *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
    - *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*
    - *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*

6.2 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.*

6.3 Added value of the joint programme

Standards

The joint programme leads to the following added values:

- *Increases internationalisation at the institutions.*
- *Stimulates multinational collaboration on teaching at a high level and makes cooperation binding.*
- *Increases transparency between educational systems.*

- *Develops study and research alternatives in accordance with emerging needs.*
- *Improves educational and research collaboration.*
- *Offers students an expanded and innovative arena for learning.*
- *Increases highly educated candidates' employability and motivation for mobility in a global labour market.*
- *Increases European and non-European students' interest in the educational programme.*
- *Increases competence at partner institutions through cooperation and implementation of a best practice system.*
- *Increases the institution's ability to change in step with emerging needs.*
- *Contributes to tearing down cultural barriers, both personal and institutional.*

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.

Based on the information presented during the virtual visit and the related documentation (e.g. Εφημερίδα της Κυβερνήσεως της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, Αρ. Φύλλου 2773, 18 Οκτωβρίου 2021), the proposed joint programme has received approval from the Greek government. The comprehensive material review by the EEC along with the information presented during the visit is the last necessary step for the approval by the authorities in Cyprus. Upon the completion of this process, it is anticipated that the programme will commence in the Fall semester of 2022.

The programme unites a public and a private institution across national borders. It is built on a detailed collaborative agreement (as presented in the Greek national gazette), which explains the rationale for the creation of the degree, the targeted audience, the programme of study, the human

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and material resources, the budget, and the money allocated for student scholarships. Further, a Μνημόνιο Συνεργασίας (memorandum of understanding, MOU) exists between the two institutions, which defines the purposes of their ongoing collaboration, the processes of implementation of the various initiatives, the framework for addressing possible conflict, and the assurances for confidentiality. This was signed in 2016 when the initial collaboration on a Special Education joint degree commenced.

The programme expands both institutions' numerous joint degrees and efforts for internationalization. Its added value, as explained by its creators, is the explicit attention to mediation as a central element of practice in intercultural education and communication in both formal and informal educational settings. Further, the integration of an intensive practicum experiences (30 ECTS) aims to promote a clear transfer from theory to practice and promote reflective practitioners. The curriculum encourages a comparative analysis of two educational systems and societies (Greece and Cyprus), which share a common language. Both institutions are committed to the success of this program. The academic personnel in both universities are well versed in the international scholarship in the field of intercultural studies and communication. The comprehensive administrative structure that exists can support the creation of this innovative programme.

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

1.The curriculum structure is purposeful and the administrative plan of action is appropriate.

2. The terms of the joint programme are clearly identified and are built on an existing collaboration of the two universities. The distribution of funds and duties is transparent.

3. The admission requirements and student progression expectations are clearly defined.

3. The quality assurance processes are detailed and comprehensive.

4. The language policy is transparent. While the main language of instruction will be Greek, certain enriching activities may be offered in English (with concurrent interpretation or closed captions).

5. There are considerations for accommodating the needs of different groups of students (e.g. asynchronous instruction with optional synchronous participation).

6. The joint programme is an important step in the further internationalization of the focal institutions, with potential for new collaborations in research and teaching.

7. Because of the strong emphasis in intercultural education and mediation, along with the integration of a practicum experiences, the degree is designed to increase the employability of its graduates within and beyond formal education, and beyond national borders. The existing bilateral agreements that exist with governmental bodies (e.g. Greek General Secretariat for Citizenship) and NGOs expand the scope of this programme beyond the formal educational sector.

8. The option that students have to choose a research project could result in important scholar contributions to the field.

9. The design of the programme has the potential to contribute strongly to the tearing down of cultural barriers, both personal and institutional, as it is based on a critical analysis of societal structures.

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.

1. 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. As the growth of this programme is anticipated, it may be wise to solidify a detailed plan for the division of duties between the two universities in an aim to promote a cohesive framework for students and further illustrate the collaborative spirit of its creators. Perhaps, co-teaching arrangements among professors from Cyprus and Greece could assist in such an endeavour.

2. Regarding the practicum, given the anticipated growth of this program, it may be wise to create very clear expectations of professional contact, along with policies/practices on how potential problems can be addressed. Given that practicum experiences are expected to be in different geographic locations, clearly communicated guidelines with the partners/field supervisors in advance of placements could assist in smooth transitions. This is especially important given that issues associated with cross-cultural communication can be quite complex in nature.

3. The sequence of classes is carefully built. As the programme is implemented and evaluated, it may be a good idea to revisit the stand-alone practicum. Perhaps, practicum experiences could be integrated earlier in the programme, in order to promote the cultivation of reflective practitioners throughout. Cultivating cultural competence and expertise is a lengthy process, after all.

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

Sub-area		_Non-compliant/_ _Partially Compliant/Compliant_
6.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	Compliant
6.2	The joint programme	Compliant
6.3	Added value of the joint programme	Compliant

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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 (Consider also the added value of the joint programme).

The MEd in Intercultural Education and Mediation is an ambitious and excellent Distance Learning programme between the University of Nicosia in Cyprus and the University of Patras in Greece. Both universities have a similar vision for internationalization. The programme is of strategic importance for both universities and addresses issues related to multicultural societies and multicultural classrooms which are topical issues in society and in the school context. The programme brings in real-life experiences and promotes student reflection.

The added value of this MEd programme is that it will produce reflexive practitioners, agents that will bring change in the field. The University of Patras is very experienced in practical training of teachers – hence the lead on the practicum which is a key strength of the programme connecting theory and practice - while the University of Nicosia holds the responsibility for the e-learning platform. Both partners equally input into the teaching. There are strong synergies between the two universities in the areas of identities, mediation, and interculturalism.

The University of Nicosia is the administrative hub of the programme. As a result, the quality assurance mechanisms from Nicosia apply. Student representatives are part of the internal quality assurance committee. A three-member committee coordinates this programme. This committee is also responsible for quality assurance using University of Nicosia processes.

The programme is entirely in Greek because the coordinators decided to address the Greek market. However, there is a future plan to develop a masters programme in English. Both universities teach in Greek but also use international (English) literature. International guest speakers should be systematically incorporated across the core and elective courses (even though their talks are being subtitled) along with further international readings.

Students are very positive about the university, they talked about active interaction with the teachers. Staff are very responsive to student emails and requests and there is a great deal of guidance and support. There is a dedicated unit for distance learning which can provide support although the e-learning model/approach should be modernized.

Overall, we were highly satisfied with how the two universities have organized and monitored their educational programmes. Our impression is that both institutions are very 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 across all areas of evaluation.

We invite both institutions to respond to the recommendations in this evaluation report.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Professor Daniel Faas	
Professor Eleni Oikonomidoy	
Professor Sawitri Saharso	
Professor Albert Sangrà Morer	
Victoria Michaelidou	

Date: 14.04.2022