

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 06/05/2021

- Higher Education Institution: Frederick University
- Town: Nicosia and Limassol
- Programme of study Name

**In Greek:**

Εκπαίδευση (3/4 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 180/240 ECTS, Διδακτορικό (PhD))

**In English:**

Education (3/4 academics years 180/240 ECTS, Doctorate (PhD))

- Language(s) of instruction: Greek
- Programme's status: Currently Operating

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].

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

## **A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report**

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
  - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
  - *the 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. 300.1.1).*
- *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, 1.8, 1.9)*

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD in Education**

**Put into place a tracking of student progress system that enables an 'at a glance' sense of where students are and what strategies might be developed to move students along more effectively.**

#### **Response:**

We thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their work and thorough effort. We believe that the personal relations between students and supervisors are strong and, as such, provide a pathway of communication evaluation and feedback between students and their thesis supervisors. We acknowledge that in few cases, part time PhD students face difficulties which lead them to hard time to organize the implementation of their research schedule. We had adopted the EEC's recommendation to systemize a process and we have already decided to implement it. Specifically, every semester the supervisor discusses with the student and they both have to sign a brief report for the progress of the thesis, which is submitted to the PhD coordinators. The specific feedback from the supervisor and the self-reflection on the progress by the student will be an alternative way to move more effectively. Although we had not any significant problems since the beginning of the program we acknowledge that the specific process will be helpful especially in the case of the need to have a change of a supervisor and/or in case a PhD student takes a hiatus from his/her studies.

## **2. Teaching, learning and student assessment**

*(ESG 1.3)*

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD**

**A recommendation for the PhD programme Education could be to include more collaboration and interaction between students, for example with peer assessment. Students have to learn as well how to critically review products of their peers and provide feedback that is correct, relevant and acceptable. These kinds of peer feedback/peer assessment assignments could also stimulate a collaborative culture amongst PhDs and enhance community feelings.**

**Response:**

PhD students who have passed their comprehensive exams and their research proposals have been approved by the relevant committee are asked to voluntarily present their research ideas and experiences with the students attending the first-year seminars PHDED902 and PHDED904. Experience has shown that this partly addresses the Committee's recommendation. Furthermore, we agree with the ECC's suggestion that students' communication and collaboration enable them to share ideas and reflect on their own thoughts, actions which are extremely important in order to develop the necessary and appropriate self-regulatory strategies. For this reason, we decided to organize each semester a seminar (different for relevant domains e.g., mathematics education, science education, technology) with the participation of the PhD students in order to discuss with peers and small groups the progress of their work, the difficulties they face and the obstacles they need to overcome. We believe that such meetings will strengthen our attempts to contribute on our students' socialization and academic growth, promoting a culture of giving and receiving constructive criticism to scholarly work in progress. An additional element has been also decided to be added to the PHDED901 and PHDED903 courses in relation to ECC's recommendation. The exercises that the students have to deliver within the aforementioned courses to be peer reviewed via the 'critical friend' approach. This will provide students with the opportunity to exchange and share their research ideas as well as collaborate and interact with each other, within the peer review – critical friend approach.

**3. Teaching Staff**

*(ESG 1.5)*

**Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD in Education**

- A planned/ delineated approach to manage students who struggle to complete in a timely way and to deal with student attrition if this becomes an issue as numbers on the different stages of the PhD programme grow.
- Monitoring the impact of the wide range of opportunities provided within the department for PHD students on their overall workload.

**Response:**

Based on the PhD university regulation, students have to go through the different phases of the PhD. After the comprehensive exam they have to submit their research proposal and implement their

research plan. The implementation of the research is divided into research stages and written stages (including the publications). There are a maximum number of semesters for the full time and the part time students and any extension has to be approved by the University Senate. The coordinators of the program ask every semester for a brief update of the work of each PhD student from the staff-supervisors in order to address on time any problems that may appear.

We agree with and adopt the EEC's recommendation on the specific issue, since most of our students are part timers and we have already discussed with the staff –supervisors and the students the necessity to prepare regularly a note with the faced difficulties and obstacles, their short time aims and the revision of the long-term research plan related to the dissertation.

#### **4. Students**

*(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)*

**There were not any suggestions or recommendations**

#### **5. Resources**

*(ESG 1.6)*

**Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD in Education**

**A resource plan for issues with progression and completion when numbers grow on this programme as stated previously.**

#### **Response:**

As we have previously mentioned we believe that this recommendation is extremely useful. Although there was an informal process already in place, we agree that it would be useful and more effective to develop and apply a formal process. We have already decided to implement it and the means by which this is achieved is described in Section 1 of the response.

## 6. Additional for distance learning programmes

*(ALL ESG)*

**N/A**

## 7. Additional for doctoral programmes

*(ALL ESG)*

### **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. A recommendation could be to link the dissertation not only to the research expertise of the supervisors, but also to the professional practice of the students. In that way students learn not only to do academic research, but also to base their practice on research evidence.

### **Response:**

Undoubtedly, the theme of the dissertation is decided and agreed by the supervisor and the PhD student in order to fulfill interests, knowledge, experiences and standards. The vast majority of our PhD students are educators in different educational levels and settings (formal, non-formal and informal). In most cases the research is being designed and takes place mainly for practical reasons at the students' work place. For this reason, in each research domain there are dissertations highly related to students' professional practice.

## **B. Conclusions and final remarks**

**The programs are coherent, challenging, and students in all programs comment on the excellence of the teaching, support, and their growth as learners. The Department has achieved a 'word of mouth' reputation for the programs that we have reviewed here that this is an excellent place to enroll, learn and flourish. We congratulate the Department and its program leads in achieving this. We offer the following program recommendations to strengthen an already good offer:**

**We offer the following program recommendations to strengthen an already good offer:**

1. It has a relatively small number of core staff for the range of teaching activity; it will be important to use their expertise efficiently by addressing student numbers in the undergraduate (BEd) program and consolidating its M. Ed (C&I) conventional teaching to compliment the distance version which it is tied to. Continue with the ongoing monitoring of class sizes and aligning expertise with programming will help.
2. Explore more explicit ways of linking theory and practice in the various programs, and make good practices which were shared with us in our visit more visible to others in the Department. A level of this happens already, in part because of the small size and close relationships. This might form the basis of scheduled professional development conversations in the Department.
3. Plan a set of strategies for increasing recruitment to the BEd to increase student numbers to around 15-20 each year (eg. a small bursary as an incentive; continue to target secondary schools; market the program in Greece and the wider diasporic community; more assertive marketing using the excellent feedback from students on the program) and monitor student intake in the BEd over the next four years.
4. Consolidate the MEd in C&I as a means of capturing a group of potential teachers needing to have C&I as part of a portfolio to enter the teaching force as the Catalogue is phased out.
5. Formalise a tracking process for student progress in the PhD program to ensure students don't get lost in the system in a situation where they can manage the time challenges they have in completing the program through not taking courses. This happens through strong conversation circles, but it needs to be formalized especially as and when the student numbers expand.
6. In the PhD program, explore with doctoral students formats that work with their busy schedules abstract writing, conference presentations, publishing, advanced methods, ethics in doing research digitally and so on. For the moment this happens at the level of student-supervisor, but there is much to be gained by having more formal arrangements for students.

**Response:**

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude for the positive comments and review of the EEC as well as for its valuable and helpful recommendations.

As we have already mentioned we believe we have adopted the necessary steps to implement the Committee's recommendations. Although many issues are addressed within the University PhD regulation and the respective Department PhD regulation, we agree that the formalization of the process for the student progress will protect us from future possible problems, due to any potential

development and expansion of the program. For this reason, as we have already previously presented, we decided upon the following actions to be included as part of the formal process: a) every semester the supervisor discusses with the student and they both have to sign a brief progress thesis report, which is submitted to the PhD coordinators. The specific feedback from the supervisor and the self-reflection on the progress by the student will be an alternative way to move more effectively and efficiently. b) Regularly the PhD students have to discuss in groups the development of their work, the conferences they attend as presenters, the journals they aim to publish their work etc. A formalization of the collaboration and a conscious self-reflection of all research phases are achieved via the process formalization.

**C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives**

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

**Date:** 06/05/2021