

300.3.2

Date: 29.9.2020

# Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:** University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** Law
- **Department:** Politics and Governance
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**  
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

## Programme 1

### **In Greek:**

Διεθνείς Σχέσεις και Ευρωπαϊκές Σπουδές (4 Έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

### **In English:**

International Relations and European Studies (4 Years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor of Arts)

## Programme 2

### **In Greek:**

Διεθνείς Σχέσεις και Σπουδές Ανατολικής Μεσογείου (3 Εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ)

### **In English:**

International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies (MA, 3 Semesters, 90 ECTS, Master of Arts)

## Programme 3

### **In Greek:**

Διεθνείς Σχέσεις και Ευρωπαϊκές Σπουδές (3 Years, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)

### **In English:**



International Relations and European Studies (3 Years,  
180 ECTS, PhD)

- **Department'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].**

## 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. Department's academic profile and orientation

### Sub-areas

- 1.1 Mission and strategic planning
- 1.2 Connecting with society
- 1.3 Development processes

### Comments made by the EEC (copied from the External Evaluation Report)

#### Findings

*The department is very committed to its educational programs. It is a small department with the capacity to formal as well as informal handling of challenges and issues. The smallness of the department also makes it possible for the different teaching groups to get a close sense of what is going on in the whole program and adjust individual elements accordingly.*

*The department has a well-trained faculty.*

*The department has managed to develop programs that are compatible with the international "market" for students as well as the Cypriote society. The part time studies increases the compatibility of the programs with the demands from the surrounding society and the department's stakeholders. The programs positively affects the Cypriote society with the supply of all three programs.*

*A high teaching load for junior staff affects their professional development.*

*There is little systematic work in order to keep contact with alumni.*

#### Strengths

- *Strong commitment of the department and staff and a comprehensive set of programs.*
- *Good societal impact and good connections to societal stakeholders*
- *The possibility of part-time studies makes the programs attractive.*

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

*The teaching load of the junior staff is high. It would help the professional development of the junior staff to have some regular possibilities to immerse themselves in whatever their area of study is.*

### Response/Action

The Department of Politics and Governance has been considered to be fully compliant in the vast majority of the criteria of this section. Out of 15 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 4 of them with the highest (5), in 8 of them with the second highest grade (4) and in the remaining 3 as partially compliant (3).

The EEC has highlighted the Department's commitment to its educational programs. Being a small Department, it has the capacity to formal as well as informal handling of challenges and issues. The EEC also noted that Department has a well-trained faculty. It has managed to develop Programs that are compatible with the international "market" for students as well as the Cypriot society. The part time studies increases the compatibility of the Programs with the demands from the surrounding society and the Department's stakeholders. It also underlines that the Programs positively affect the Cypriot society.

The EEC has further indicated some areas of improvement and recommendations. It has underlined that the teaching load of the junior staff is high and that it would help the professional development of the junior staff to have some regular possibilities to immerse themselves in whatever their area of study is. The Department endorses this recommendation. It has already included related provisions in its strategy, while it fully complies with the University's strategic vision and regulations. It will continue encouraging all staff, particularly junior staff, to make use of the University's research endorsement policies, while it will reinforce its efforts to support their personal development, in accordance with the University's regulations and objectives and taking seriously into account the CYQAA's new upcoming regulatory framework. Furthermore, the School of Law has decided to organize, in cooperation with the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs, research seminars on a regular basis that will give the junior staff the opportunity to present and discuss their research findings with their senior colleagues. When it comes to the teaching load, the number of courses taught is comparable to other Universities in Cyprus and in accordance with the regulations of the University of Nicosia. The Department will discuss the possibility of extra teaching release for the junior faculty with the related administrative bodies of the University.

## 2. Quality Assurance

### Sub-areas

- 2.1 System and quality assurance strategy
- 2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

### Comments made by the EEC (copied from the External Evaluation Report)

#### Findings

- *Teaching quality is assured during the formal Quality Assurance system as well as through the formal and informal social relations in the department. Shared commitment to quality teaching also plays a role.*
- *Clear enrollment criteria.*
- *Happy and satisfied students at all levels.*
- *Close relations between teaching staff and students. Also enhanced through different teaching and research assistance jobs.*

#### Strengths

- *Shared commitment to quality teaching.*
- *Good teaching environment and happy students.*
- *Good mix of national and international students.*
- *Very good infrastructure and facilities.*
- *Good opportunities for part time studies.*

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The department could systematize and improve its relations to alumni, as well as improve outplacement information for all three programmes.
- The department could improve its relations to alumni.
- Increase availability of grants for doctoral students' conference attendance.

#### **Response/Action**

The Department of Politics and Governance has been considered to be fully compliant in the vast majority of the criteria of this section. Out of 27 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 11 of them with the highest grade (5), in 15 with the second highest grade (4) and in 3 as partially compliant (3). One category is not applicable.

The EEC has noted that teaching quality is assured during the formal Quality Assurance system as well as through the formal and informal social relations in the Department. Shared commitment to quality teaching also plays a role. There are clear enrolment criteria and happy as well as satisfied students at all levels. Furthermore, there are close relations between teaching staff and students. When it comes to the strengths of the Department, the EEC has underlined the shared commitment to quality teaching, the good teaching environment, the good mix of national and



international students, the very good infrastructure and facilities, as well as the good opportunities for part time studies.

The EEC has further indicated some areas of improvement and recommendations. It suggests that the Department systematizes and improves its relations with alumni, as well as improve outplacement information for all three programmes. It also suggests that it should increase availability of grants for Doctoral students' conference attendance. The Department concurs with these recommendations. In relation with the alumni, the creation of alumni clubs is already under way, at the level of the School of Law, including clubs for alumni in International Relations and Public Administration (which suggest the main areas of the Department's interest). In this framework, it will cooperate with the School of Law in order to enhance the existing communication channels and create new ones, mainly by using online tools. It will also utilize the renovated Departmental website to this purpose. In relation with the issue of the availability of grants for Doctoral students' participation to international conferences, it will work systematically to improve the students' overall exposure to such opportunities (see more details in the related Program report).



### 3. Administration

#### Comments made by the EEC (copied from the External Evaluation Report)

##### Findings

- The department appeared well administered.
- Different boards and committees seems to work according to rules and standards.
- Open and frank atmosphere.
- In case of students' complaints over e.g. grades, a new internal examiner takes over.
- In case of disagreement between the internal and the external examiners of doctoral dissertation an new external examiner is appointed, so that there are tow external and one internal examiner.

##### Strengths

- Well administered department
- Open atmosphere

##### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- In case of students complaints of e.g. grades there is only a (new) internal but no external check on the grade. This may not be to the advantage of the student complaining. That said, the committee got the impression that there were only few annual complaints.

#### Response/Action

The Department of Politics and Governance has been considered to be fully compliant in the vast majority of the criteria of this section. Out of 10 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 4 of them with the highest grade (5), in 4 with the second highest grade (4) and in 1 with as partially compliant (3). One category is not applicable.

The EEC has confirmed that the Department is well administered. It notes that there are different boards and committees that seem to work according to rules and standards, and that there is open and frank atmosphere.

The EEC has further made some comments in relation with the students complaints for grades. Particularly, it notes that there is only a (new) internal but no external check on the grade. This, according to the EEC, may not be to the advantage of students. That said, the Committee got the impression that there were only few complaints per year. The Department agrees that the process may have weaknesses under given circumstances, although it has been effective so far in practice. The current system is based on the US system, as well as on those of many European countries and is also applicable generally in Cypriot Universities. It was introduced in the regulations of the University of Nicosia after discussion at Senate level. The Department will discuss this matter with the University bodies in order to examine the possibility of amending the process by adding the option for an external examiner.

## 4. Learning and Teaching

### Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

### Comments made by the EEC (copied from the External Evaluation Report)

#### Findings

- *The department takes much pride in delivering quality teaching.*
- *Compliance with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)*
- *Professional and personal commitment by the individual teachers.*
- *Some active interference with external stakeholders.*

#### Strengths

*Strong commitment from department as well as individual teachers to quality teaching.*

*Close involvement with students, satisfied students.*

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

*Positive stakeholder feedback of the development of the various program is beneficial, however it should not sacrifice academic interests*

### Response/Action

The Department of Politics and Governance has been considered to be compliant in all criteria of this section. Out of 13 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 9 of them with the highest grade (5) and in the remaining 4 with the second highest grade (4).

The EEC notes that the Department takes much pride in delivering quality teaching. It adds that the Department is compliant with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF); furthermore, the Department, as well as the faculty members manifest personal and professional commitment to quality teaching. It also highlights the existence of some active interference with external stakeholders, but it notes that, albeit beneficial, it should not sacrifice academic interests. The Department concurs with this assessment. Its recently drafted strategy includes provisions that aim to safeguard academic quality in all domains of the Department's engagement/tasks, including teaching and research.

## 5. Teaching Staff

### Comments made by the EEC (copied from the External Evaluation Report)

#### Findings

- Teaching staff have a broad and varied educational and scientific background.
- Committed teaching staff.
- Periodical sabbaticals leave opportunities for professional development abroad
- Part time teachers and junior staff have a heavy teaching burden, and thus fewer opportunities to engage in professional development.
- Feedback is sufficient according to the students.

#### Strengths

- Committed teaching staff.
- Well educated teaching staff
- Close relations with students

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Encourage further internationalization by better possibilities for sabbaticals.
- Encourage participation in international conferences with paper presentation.
- Give junior faculty better chances for professional development.

### Response/Action

The Department of Politics and Governance has been considered to be fully compliant in the vast majority of the criteria of this section. Out of 8 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 2 of them with the highest grade (5), in 5 with the second highest grade (4) and in 1 as partially compliant (3).

The EEC has noted that the teaching staff have a broad and varied educational and scientific background. It underlines the teaching staff's commitment, while periodical sabbaticals leave opportunities for professional development abroad. It notes though that part time faculty and junior staff have a heavy teaching burden, and thus fewer opportunities to engage in professional development. Furthermore, it highlights the students' assessment that feedback is sufficient.

The EEC has made suggestions for further improving the Department. It expressed the view that the Department should encourage further internationalization by better possibilities for sabbaticals. We concur with this suggestion. The Senate has approved new regulations for sabbaticals that will be discussed at the Council level. The Department supports the Senate's decision and believes that it will improve the situation, but ultimately this is an issue to be decided by the Council. It also stresses that the Department should encourage participation in international conferences with paper presentation and that it should give junior faculty better chances for professional development. The Department agrees that these two points are of outmost importance and, therefore, it will intensify its efforts to encourage faculty and PhD students to participate in international conferences (more details are included in the program report for the PhD program. In relation with actions to be taken regarding the junior faculty's professional development, see above in section 1.

## 6. Research

### Comments made by the EEC (copied from the External Evaluation Report)

#### Findings

- *A diverse scientific background of research staff.*
- *Some possibilities of research funding, e.g. conference attendance, data collection, research assistance, field-work etc.*
- *Few other departments with specialization in Eastern Mediterranean Studies.*

#### Strengths

- *A diverse scientific background of research staff.*
- *Specialization in Eastern Mediterranean Studies.*

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

##### *Increase internationalization:*

- *Better opportunities for sabbaticals.*
- *Encourage participation in international conferences with paper presentation, also for doctoral students.*
- *Increase publications in peer reviewed journals.*

## Response/Action

The Department of Politics and Governance has been considered to be compliant in the vast majority of the criteria of this section. Out of 9 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 6 of them with the second highest grade (4) and in 1 as partially compliant (3). Two sub-categories are non applicable.

The EEC has underlined the existence of a diverse scientific background of research staff, as well as that there are some possibilities of research funding, e.g. conference attendance, data collection, research assistance, field-work etc. Moreover, it noted that there are only few other Departments with specialization in Eastern Mediterranean Studies

The EEC has also made suggestions for further improving the Department. It has suggested to safeguard better opportunities for sabbaticals, to encourage participation in international conferences with paper presentation for faculty members and for Doctoral students, as well as to increase publications in peer reviewed journals. In relation with sabbaticals and the encouragement of participation in international conferences see section 5 above. In relation to publications in peer reviewed journals, the Department will renew its commitment in line with the University's policies for promotion of peer reviewed publications; this is also included in its recently drafted Departmental strategy.

## 7. Resources

### Comments made by the EEC (copied from the External Evaluation Report)

#### Findings

- *Very good physical resources in terms of buildings, libraries, IT, etc.*
- *Funding for individual research projects, conference attendance is placed at university level*
- *Rules for sabbaticals is placed at university level*

#### Strengths

*Physical resources.*

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- *Increase funding for individual research projects, conference attendance.*
- *Locate such resources at the departmental level.*

## Response/Action

The Department of Politics and Governance has been considered to be compliant in all criteria of this section. Out of 7 sub-categories it has been evaluated in one of them with the highest grade (5) and in 4 of them with the second highest grade (4). Two sub-categories are non applicable.

The EEC has confirmed that the Department has very good physical resources in terms of buildings, libraries, IT, etc. It also underlines the availability of funding for individual research projects and that conference attendance as well as the rules for sabbaticals are placed at University level.

The EEC has also made suggestions for further improvement of the Department. It has suggested that we should increase funding for individual research projects and conference attendance. The Department concurs and it has already included such provisions and objectives in its recently drafted strategy, which will be further enhanced. See also above, in sections 5 and 6. Furthermore, the EEC suggests that such resources should be located at the Departmental level. The Department agrees and it will transfer this suggestion to the University level. This is ultimately something to be decided by the management of the University and not the Department.

## B. Conclusions and final remarks

### Copied from the External Evaluation Report

*“The committee was impressed by the programs provided by the department of Politics and Governance, University of Nicosia, and the dedication shown by staff to supporting the student learning experience. For all three programs there is a clear sense of focus and commitment. The department utilizes its small size to create tight relations between teaching staff and students at all levels. As seen from the committee the department “walk the talk” when it comes to committing itself to quality teaching and the creation of a secure, and yet challenging learning environment.*

*The committee is of the overall opinion that the programs come with good design and a commitment to secure quality by standard operating procedures as well as personal engagement in teaching and students. Teaching programs are moving targets in dialogue with the surrounding society and should always be open to discussions and realignments. It is from this philosophy that the committee above has noted aspects of the program to be considered in order to develop and improve the existing already well-functioning programs.”*

### Response/Action

We wish to thank the EEC for the professionalism they showed. The detailed discussion of all issues pertinent to the Department under evaluation, led to a fruitful exchange between the members of the EEC and the official representatives of the University and faculty members of the Department. The discussion proved to be extremely helpful due to the expertise of the members of the EEC and their willingness to share their suggestions and recommendations for further improving the Department.

We have assessed and reviewed carefully the EEC report. We are pleased to note that the Report is very positive, and we thank the EEC for their positive comments. We note that the Department of Politics and Governance has been considered to be compliant in all criteria. Out of 89 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 31 of them with the highest grade (5), in 46 with the second highest grade (4) and in 9 as partially compliant (3); 6 categories are non-applicable. Allocating to each criterion equal weight, this overall grade would translate to 4.5 out of 5, which is undeniably a high grade. We thank the EEC for stating that it ‘was impressed by the Programs provided by the department of Politics and Governance, University of Nicosia, and the dedication shown by staff to supporting the student learning experience’. We also thank the EEC for its clear positive evaluation of the Department.

We fully acknowledge that all policies of the Department are always amenable to further improvement, and indeed we have been constantly working towards further improving our Department since it was initially accredited. Accordingly, the suggestions for further improvement offered by the EEC are taken very seriously into account. We consider the suggestions of the EEC as very helpful and we will try to incorporate them to the widest extent possible. Having said that, we acknowledge that, as the EEC has noted, the recommendations aim to the further improvement of an already compliant Department. We thank the Committee for all the

suggestions/recommendations. We address each one herein, for further improving the Department.

**1. “The teaching load of the junior staff is high. It would help the professional development of the junior staff to have some regular possibilities to immerse themselves in whatever their area of study is.”**

The Department endorses this recommendation. It has already included related provisions in its strategy, while it fully complies with the University’s strategic vision and regulations.

**Response/Action:** The Department will continue encouraging all staff, particularly junior staff, to make use of the University’s research endorsement policies, while it will reinforce its efforts to support their personal development, in accordance with the University’s regulations and objectives and taking seriously into account the CYQAA’s new upcoming regulatory framework. Furthermore, the School of Law has decided to organize, in cooperation with the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs, research seminars on a regular basis that will give the junior staff the opportunity to present and discuss their research findings with their senior colleagues. When it comes to the teaching load, the number of courses taught is comparable to other Universities in Cyprus and is in accordance with the regulations of the University of Nicosia. The Department will discuss the possibility of extra teaching release for the junior faculty with the related administrative bodies of the University.

**2. “The Department should systematize and improve its relations with alumni, as well as improve outplacement information for all three programmes. Increase availability of grants for doctoral students’ conference attendance.”**

The Department concurs with these recommendations. Some actions have already been planned to this direction.

**Response/Action:** In relation with the alumni, the creation of alumni clubs is already under way, at the level of the School of Law, including clubs for alumni in International Relations and Public Administration (which suggest the main areas of the Department’s interest). In this framework, it will cooperate with the School of Law in order to enhance the existing communication channels and create new ones, mainly by using online tools. It will also utilize the renovated Departmental website to this purpose. In relation to the issue of the availability of grants for Doctoral students’ participation to international conferences, it will work systematically to improve the students’ overall exposure to such opportunities (see more details in the related program report).

**3. “In case of students complaints of e.g. grades there is only a (new) internal but no external check on the grade. This may not be to the advantage of the student complaining. That said, the committee got the impression that there were only few annual complaints.”**

The Department agrees that the process may have weaknesses under given circumstances, although it has been effective so far in practice.

**Response/Action:** The current system is based on the US system, as well as on those of many European countries, and is also applicable generally in Cypriot Universities. It was introduced in the regulations of the University of Nicosia after discussion at Senate level. The Department will discuss this matter with the University bodies in order to examine the possibility of amending the process by adding the option for an external examiner.

**4. “Positive stakeholder feedback of the development of the various program is beneficial, however it should not sacrifice academic interests”**

The Department concurs with this assessment.

**Response/Action:** The Department's recently drafted strategy includes provisions that aim to safeguard academic quality in all aspects of its tasks and activities, including teaching and research.

**5. “Encourage further internationalization by better possibilities for sabbaticals. Encourage participation in international conferences with paper presentation. Give junior faculty better chances for professional development.”**

We concur with these suggestions. Some actions are already under way, while more can be taken.

**Response/Action:** The Senate has approved new regulations for sabbaticals that will be discussed at the Council level. The Department supports the Senate's decision and believes that it will improve the situation, but ultimately this is an issue to be decided by the Council. Furthermore, the Department will intensify its efforts to encourage faculty and PhD students to participate in international conferences (more details are included in the program report for the PhD program). In relation with actions to be taken regarding the junior faculty's professional development, see above in point 1.

**6. “Increase publications in peer reviewed journals.”**

The Department agrees with this suggestion and has already taken actions to this direction, which can be intensified.

**Response/Action:** The Department will renew its commitment with the University's policies for promotion of peer reviewed publications, which is also included in its recently drafted departmental strategy.

**7. “Increase funding for individual research projects, conference attendance. Locate such resources at the departmental level.”**

The Department agrees with this suggestion and has already taken actions to this direction, which can be intensified.

**Response/Action:** The Department has already included provisions and objectives regarding funding for research projects and conference attendance in its recently drafted strategy, which will be further enhanced. See also above, in points 5 and 6. In relation with locating research and conference resources to the Departmental level, the Department will transfer this suggestion to the University level. This is ultimately something to be decided by the management of the University and not the Department.

We would like to thank the Committee once more, both for the positive and fair evaluation, as well as the constructive comments and suggestions and the fruitful discussion that we had with its members during the lengthy virtual visit. We also thank the Committee for the time and thoroughness it dedicated to the evaluation of the Department and for helping us improve through the suggestions made. All recommendations of the Committee refer to further improvement, and some need discussion and potential decision at various levels (i.e. Senate) as they are not applicable only to this specific Department. The recommendations and evaluation of the Committee are seriously taken into account for the further improvement of the Department. We also take into account the discussion that we had during the evaluation, including points that have not been listed in the EEC's Report, i.e. the EEC's views about our Department's plans for further growth and design of new academic programs; these programs should be in line with the areas of interest of faculty and the School's/University's objectives for further growth. We consider this endorsement under the conditions of external peer review as a resounding vote of confidence in the Department's record and potential for academic success.





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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



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We finally acknowledge the positive evaluation of the Department, which constitutes a clear recommendation for accreditation.



### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Panayiotis Angelides</b>	Professor, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs	
<b>Achilles C. Emilianides</b>	Professor, Dean	
<b>Andreas Theophanous</b>	Professor and Head of the Department	
<b>Christina Ioannou</b>	Associate Professor and Associate Dean	

Date: 29.3.2021

