

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 21.9.2020

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** Law
- **Department:** Law
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)
Programme 1
In Greek:
Νομική (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)
In English:
Law (4years, 240 ECTS, LLB)
Programme 2
In Greek:
Νομική (1,5 έτη, 120 ECTS, Μάστερ)
In English:
Law (1,5 years, 120 ECTS, LLM)
Programme 3
In Greek:
Νομική (3 έτη, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)
In English:
Law (3years, 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**

The Department of Law has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. Out of 15 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 12 of them with the highest grade (5) and in the remaining 3 with the second highest grade (4) which indicates full compliance. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed the positive contribution of the Department to Cypriot society and the international community and has noted that the Department is ambitious, dynamic, has attracted excellent members of staff, and has an effective strategy of attracting high quality students. It has further noted that the programmes of the Department are well-devised.

The EEC has further made suggestions for further improving the Department. It has suggested that diversity of backgrounds of students could be further improved by attracting more international students. We fully agree with the recommendation and it is part of our departmental strategy, which we hope to further implement. This is a difficult task, but is one of our priorities. The EEC has further made suggestion about the recruitment of additional full-time professorial staff in the future. We concur with this suggestion, which is also part of departmental strategy. The Department has constantly grown during the past few years and we aim for further growth in the future.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

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

The Department of Law has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. Out of 27 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 24 of them with the highest grade (5) and in the remaining 3 with the second highest grade (4) which indicates full compliance. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the mechanisms for quality assurance are high and rigorous and that the Department is sufficiently concerned about quality assurance improvement. Also, that the resources are adequate and appropriate. It has further been noted that there are very good learning resources, effective anti-plagiarism strategy and a structured process for students' complaints regarding their grades.

The EEC has further made suggestions for further improving the Department. It has been noted in particular, that there is a need for more flexible opening hours of the library especially during examination periods and more flexibility in terms of loaning books. We concur with the suggestion which is welcome and we will aim to discuss it as an issue of general university policy. The EEC has further noted that while the University has a Centre for research and counselling services, greater coordination amongst academic counselling and members of the Department might serve better the needs of the students. We take note of this suggestions which we will also aim to implement further. The EEC has further noted that a better collection and analysis of employability data of graduates is recommended. We concur with the suggestion which is welcome and we will aim to discuss it as an issue of general university policy, and implement it accordingly.

3. Administration

The Department of Law has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. Out of 10 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 8 of them with the highest grade (5) and in the remaining 2 with the second highest grade (4) which indicates full compliance. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the Department is well organized and well-run and that the system of governance is well established and efficient. It has also noted that the Department has adequate disciplinary and grievance procedures. It has further noted that there is dedicated staff, effective collaboration, concern about student welfare, efficient committees and effective decision-making processes.

The EEC has further made suggestions for further improving the Department. It has noted that a future increase in the annual intake of students would require more administrative support. We concur with the recommendation and will aim to implement it, once the need arises.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

The Department of Law has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. Out of 13 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 11 of them with the highest grade (5) and in the remaining 2 with the second highest grade (4) which indicates full compliance. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the programme is designed very well and contains all the relevant courses, as well as a large number of electives. It has also confirmed that the criteria for, and methods of assessment, as well as criteria for marking are available online, and that the programme benefits from external expertise.

The EEC has further made suggestions for further improving the Department. It has been noted that marking is left to individual professors and that it would be advised to develop a system to calibrate the grading by different teachers. We note that double marking and calibration of grading is generally not used in Cypriot universities for a variety of reasons. Taking into account the recommendation, the Department will ensure that there is a further enhancement of the internal review system at programme level, and of external oversight in cases of disputes of the marks. Furthermore, as part of the internal review process sample second marking will take place in order to assess whether there are significant discrepancies at course level which are not justified by the exercise of the instructor's academic freedom.

5. Teaching Staff

The Department of Law has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. Out of 8 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 7 of them with the highest grade (5) and in the remaining 1 with the second highest grade (4) which indicates full compliance. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the teaching staff consists of highly qualified and internationally educated members, who are regularly engaged in professional training and development. It has also noted that there is a strong link between research and teaching, that the course content is carefully devised, and that the required textbooks are highly relevant and up-to-date. It has further noted that there is an active encouragement for the development of student research skills.

The EEC has further made suggestions for further improving the Department. It has suggested that additional full-time professors would allow for more devoted time to teaching and research and obtaining of third-party funding. We concur with this recommendation which we will aim to further implement in the future. It has further noted that it would be advisable to revisit the effectiveness of teaching staff often performing the function of student welfare counsellors. The recommendation is welcome and will be discussed as an issue of general university policy. We note that the University already employs academic counsellors and student welfare counsellors. Teaching staff may mostly engage in academic tutoring rather than as student welfare counsellors, although the coordinators of the programme might have increased functions.

6. Research

The Department of Law has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. Out of 9 sub-categories it has been evaluated in all of them with the highest grade (5) which indicates full compliance. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that members of faculty are committed to presenting their research at international conferences and publishing in peer-reviewed journals. It was further noted that there is a well-devised system of research support, which includes incentives for internationally excellent publications and for funding activities.

The EEC has further made suggestions for further improving the Department. It has suggested to follow-up with additional funding initiatives for research following the recent successful application for Horizon 2020. We concur with the recommendation which is part of the departmental strategy. It has further been noted that the extensive publication work of the members of faculty would be a good tool for the Department's mission to attract a more diverse international student population. We fully agree and we will aim to further implement this in the future.

7. Resources

The Department of Law has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. Out of 7 sub-categories it has been evaluated in all of them with the highest grade (5) which indicates full compliance. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the Department appears to be adequately supported and that it is committed to an ongoing evaluation of possible risks and new opportunities for enhancing its sustainability and programmes. It has further noted that there is an appropriate auditing culture.

The EEC has further made suggestions for further improving the Department. It has suggested that the process of awarding scholarships and the level of financial support given to students could require further reflection and that there might be room for the establishment of a departmental scholarship fund. We concur. This is an issue that will be raised with the appropriate University organs.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

We wish to thank the EEC for the professionalism they showed during the execution of their duties. The detailed discussion of all issues pertinent to the degree under evaluation, led to a fruitful discussion between the members of the EEC and the official representatives of the University and faculty members of the programme. 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 programme. The demanding set of questions allowed us to elaborate on the pedagogical foundations of the programme and expand upon the content of the application form.

We have assessed and reviewed carefully the EEC report. We are pleased to note that the report is extremely positive, and we thank the EEC for their positive comments. We note that the Department of Law has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria. Out of 89 sub-categories it has been evaluated in 78 of them with the highest grade (5) and in the remaining 11 with the second highest grade (4) which indicates full compliance. Allocating to each criterion equal weight, this overall grade would translate to 4.88 out of 5, indeed an extremely high overall grade. We thank the EEC for concluding that the Department of Law 'has become a centre of excellence in teaching and research'. We also thank the EEC for its clear positive evaluation and recommendation for accreditation of the Department.

We fully acknowledge that all 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 fully compliant Department. We thank the committee for all the suggestions/recommendations. We address each one herein, for further improving the Department.

1. The Department needs to maintain its strong focus on enhancing its international visibility, for instance through further participation of the faculty in international conferences and projects, which may also make the Department more attractive to prospective students and will further stimulate partnerships with partners beyond the region

We fully agree with the recommendation and as the committee has noted, we have made significant efforts towards enhancing our international visibility during the past few years. There is definitely much room for improvement, and this is something we will aim to do during the upcoming years on the basis of the departmental strategy.

Response/Action: We concur with the recommendation and we will aim to implement it further in the future.

2. The diversity of the student population could be improved by attracting more international students

We fully agree with the recommendation and it is part of our departmental strategy, which we hope to further implement. This is a difficult task, but is one of our priorities.

Response/Action: We concur with the recommendation and we will aim to implement it further in the future.

3. There is a need for more flexible opening hours of the library especially during examination periods and more flexibility in terms of loaning books

We note that the committee has commented positively on all aspects of the process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology. We view this as a suggestion for further improvement.

Response/Action: We concur with the suggestion which is welcome and we will aim to discuss it as an issue of general university policy.

4. A better collection and analysis of employability data of graduates are recommended

We concur with this recommendation. Further collection and analysis of employability data of graduates can definitely further guide the Department's actions.

Response/Action: We concur with the suggestion which is welcome and we will aim to discuss it as an issue of general university policy.

5. A future increase in the annual student intake of students would require more administrative support

We concur with the recommendation.

Response/Action: We concur with the suggestion which is welcome and we will aim to implement it once the need arises.

6. The Department could consider a system to calibrate the grading, such as double marking or other methods

We note that as a general comment the Committee has commented positively about the methods of assessment and the marking criteria. We note that we already have external oversight in case of disputes of marks. We have also in place a system of internal review of assignments and examination scripts. However, we do not have in place a system for second marking, since this is not a system applied by the University, or Cypriot universities more generally. We view the suggestion as one for further improvement.

Response/Action: The recommendation for double marking has to be discussed as a general university policy, since it cannot be applied only at Department level. The Department will, however, ensure that there is immediate further enhancement of the internal review system at programme level, and of external oversight in cases of disputes of the marks. Furthermore, as part of the internal review process sample second marking will take place in order to assess whether there are significant discrepancies at course level which are not justified by the exercise of the instructor's academic freedom.

7. The active encouragement of student research skills could be made more visible in the published material

The recommendation is positively received. As the committee has already noted we actively encourage student research skills, but we note the committee's remark about further visibility in the published material.

Response/Action: The suggestion of the external committee is positively received and will be implemented through further visibility in the published material.

8. Teaching staff often perform the function of student welfare counsellors and it would be advisable to revisit this issue and examine its effectiveness.

We note that the University already employs academic counsellors and student welfare counsellors. Teaching staff may mostly engage in academic tutoring rather than as student welfare counsellors, although the co-ordinators of the programme might have increased functions. We view this as a suggestion for further improvement.

Response/Action: The recommendation is welcome and will be discussed as an issue of general university policy.

9: Consider whether to revise the system of granting scholarships

As the committee notes, academic merit scholarships are granted on a performance basis per semester which may mean that some students may start with a scholarship, but may lose it in the process due to a slightly lower performance in a particular semester leading to hardship for some students. Whereas, the University organs have the necessary flexibility to correct any such injustices, the committee notes that an institutional change might help the students more.

Response/Action: The recommendation is received favourably, and will be addressed at the competent university bodies since the award of scholarships is a centralized issue for the university.

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 the Department through the suggestions made. All recommendations of the committee refer to further improvement, and some need discussion and potential decision at Senate level 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 consider this endorsement under the conditions of external peer review as a resounding vote of confidence in the Department and its potential for academic success.

We finally acknowledge the clear positive evaluation and recommendation for accreditation of the Department.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

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

Date: 21.9.2020

