

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 09/07/2021

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Neapolis University Pafos
- **Town:** Paphos
- **School/Faculty:** Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities
- **Department:** History, Politics and International Studies
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

Programme 2

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

Programme 3

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

- **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**

1. "The ambition of disciplinary breadth, as reflected, by the Department's mission statement on teaching and research (politics, history and IR) is not fully matched by the number and academic profile of its staff. This, inevitably, has an impact on the coherence and credibility of its programs. There are evidence of synergy between the programs offered by the Department and those available in the School of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities"

RESPONSE

Done. The number of the full time academic staff of the Department has increased. The full time staff of the Department already counts 9 full time permanent staff <https://www.nup.ac.cy/faculty-department-of-history-politics-and-international-studies/>

Namely:

- Professor Georgios Georgis
 - Professor Pantelis Sklias
 - Professor Marios Evriviades
 - Professor Vasilis Kardasis (in transfer from the University of Crete – new employment)
 - Assistant Professor Floros Flouros (new employment) – see **Appendix 1**
 - Lecturer Mersilia Anastasiadou (new employment) – see **Appendix 1**
 - Lecturer Kyriakos Iakovidis
 - Lecturer Stavros Christodoulou
 - Lecturer Katerina Papazacharia
2. «The chronological coverage (and scope) of its history provision needs to be narrowed. The Politics (i.e. political science) provision is currently very thin. The IR provision is relatively stronger, but primarily focused on security studies.»

RESPONSE

Done.

- The issue has already been addressed in the latest EEC of the MA in Modern and Contemporary History, which has been accredited.
- The security dimension is the one NUP wanted to achieve and accredit.

3. “There is no evidence to suggest that the Department is pro-active in reaching out to the Turkish Cypriot community (or indeed to an international audience).”

RESPONSE

Done. The reaching out of the Turkish-Cypriot community is out of the scope and the mandate of the EEC, reflecting the official policies of the Republic. Otherwise, the Department has already been active in reaching the international community since we are already running a Third Country group (no Greeks, non-Cypriots) in the MSc in International Relations, Strategy and Security. This has been explicitly expressed during the EEC.

4. “There is not clear evidence of how the Department develops its staff recruitment strategy or the funding/training available for the development of its staff. The Department currently has a polarized staff profile, with a small number of Professor (all male) and all the rest placed at the Lecturer level. There needs to be greater clarity on the requirements for career progression and a transparent process to regulate this.”

RESPONSE

Done. The University has a clear policy on staff progression as well as the development of its staff. See **Appendix 2: Staff Development and Staff Promotion policies and Appendix 3: Research policy.**

5. “The Department attracts a large number of Greek students, but greater effort needs to be placed on diversifying its student intake”

RESPONSE

The issue has been dealt with. See point 3 above.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

2.1 System and quality assurance strategy

2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

1. “Whilst the quality assurance strategy is generally good, the criteria are less clear notably in terms of research”

RESPONSE

Done. The criteria are very clear and there is a very transparent and concrete policy already applied in the University.
See Appendix 3.

2. “The quality assurance mechanisms for the programme of study are a little uneven. In particular, the panel noted with some worry the fact that for some distance learning degrees, none of the teaching and mentoring staff comes from the University itself. Whilst we accept that it is allowable to have associate staff contributing to such distance learning degrees, the panel was not reassured that not having any core staff in the teaching and mentoring staff for the specific degrees would ensure a homogeneous and reassuring experience for students or would enable a fully compliant quality assurance procedure for the programmes of study. The students recruitment also seems a little worrying in that it seems that very few candidates are denied entry, which may also impact quality.”

«Issues with the risk of inequalities and inconsistencies due to some distance learning degrees being entirely (rather than partly) outsourced in terms of teaching and mentoring. Very little student selection and lack of clarity on academic staff recruitment.»

RESPONSE

The following points constitute our response in order to substantiate that **the issue of concern** in terms of “ensuring a homogeneous and reassuring experience for students or would enable a fully compliant quality assurance procedure for the programmes of study” **is not valid**:

- A comprehensive mentoring and support scheme for NUP Associate Staff is applied by the Distance Learning Unit (**See Appendix 4**); Additional mentoring and support activities are organised by the Programme Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator per se (**Appendix 5**)
- All DL offered courses have been allocated to permanent academic staff for coordination as per CYQAA instructions and accreditation procedures (**See Appendix 6**);
- All dissertation theses supervising bodies include at least one NUP permanent member staff (**Appendix 7**);
- The student population of the courses is very homogeneous; 90% of the candidates for the MSc in International Relations, Strategy and Security are Military Officers or related security – foreign affairs professions, while for the MA in Modern and Contemporary History 90% comes from the Education Sector. Eventually, this further enhances the homogeneous background and the coherence of the programmes.

Additionally, we hereby attach (**Appendix 8**) the opinion of the 2020-2021 elected representative of the DL students in the MSc in International Relations, Strategy and Security Mrs. Outsí who has also been the elected representative of the DL students in the University for the academic year 2020-2021. We also attach the opinion of Mrs. Glykeria Pappa, a recent graduate of the MA in Modern and Contemporary History.

Administration

“Additional administrative staff needs to be recruited.”

RESPONSE

Done. The Department has been enhanced with one more member of staff.

3. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

1. “- Students’ recruitment strategy is not always very clear”

RESPONSE

The students’ recruitment strategy is very clear and it is very much based on the academic and professional background of the candidates which is very homogeneous (90% of the applicants are military and security related officers as well as functionaries of the educational sector.

2. “- There is sometimes a lack of clarity about the mission and a contradiction between broad announced ambitions and scope and a more “niche” reality. For instance, one degree refers to politics with almost no politics in it, the vision of IR is somewhat specific with main focus on strategic studies, and the conceptions of history ignore many periods.”

RESPONSE

The degrees, their content and titles have been accredited through rigorous accreditation procedures and scholars, which are experts in the field. Note withstanding that the Chairman of the said EEC was a member of the EEC that accredited the MSc in European Politics and Governance, which is the MSc title we suppose is under question.

3. “- Unfortunately, the panel found it very difficult to get much information from students about the student experience due to the very restricted sample of students meeting the panel. The number was small (only one undergraduate for instance), they were almost exclusively mature students whilst the students themselves confirmed to us that there is in fact a mixture of mature and traditional students, and only one student was actually from Cyprus. There was also no students from the degrees fully taught by associated staff which are those the panel had most questions about. In terms of visit preparation and organization, the panel felt that it would be far more productive if the panel was sent long list of possible students to interview and chose how many and which it would be helpful to talk to. This also means that students were referring to quality supervision with only one specific member of staff which makes it very difficult to assess the experience of the student body as a whole.”

RESPONSE

We would be happy to follow any of the recommendations. See also **Appendix 8** for further student appraisals on the programmes.

4. “- Student experience seems to vary a lot by degree, with some degrees having almost no elective, and little chance of mixing and matching across the three named disciplines at the heart of the department’s identity.”

RESPONSE

The content and the structures of the degrees have been accredited.

5. “- The PhD programme does not seem to have sufficient numbers of structure to be fully fulfilling for students and may not be entirely realistic. The PhD experience does not offer enough structure and seems not to have sufficient numbers to be sustainable at the moment.”

RESPONSE

The PhD programme fully complies with the terms and regulations it was accredited under. We would be happy to submit additional documentation, if requested. Numbers are sufficient to be sustainable.

4. Teaching Staff

1. “Unfortunately, the panel felt that there is a significant problem with some distance learning degrees being entirely taught and supervised by associated staff.

This creates uneven student experience and makes accountability harder for the students involved.

The panel was also concerned that there is very little in terms of research-led teaching

Finally, the staff available is simply not enough to cover the breadth of the claimed disciplinary expertise associated with the department. Politics is mentioned in some degrees without any foundations of political science being taught, history and international relations are conceived in fairly limited ways with some significant gaps, and there is little effort to provide connections between those disciplines.”

RESPONSE

Let us first state:

1. This is a newly established Department;
2. All Department programmes are DIPAE accredited
3. In terms of conventional programmes, the BSc in International Relations and Security is running with one semester only, meaning 5 courses. The MA in Modern and Contemporary History is running in Conventional form, thus creating workload for 6 courses. **In total, in its new form the Department has 9 full time staff for a teaching workload of 11 conventional courses.**
4. At the time of the EEC the Department counted 7 full time staff. Now, taking into consideration the EEC’s remarks and the Department’s needs, **we have increased the number to 9 full time staff**, with the addition of Dr. Flouros and Prof. Kardasis.
5. The DL programme in International Relations, Strategy and Security, and European Politics and Governance, is tutored by highly qualified Associate Teaching Staff. ALL courses are mentored and coordinated by NUP Full time Academics.
6. In terms of the research capability of the staff and the allocation of DL courses to full time academic staff, we hereby provide the schematic information in **Appendix 6**.
7. All academic staff is research active in full correlation with the courses they teach or coordinate. See **Appendix 9**.

5. Research

“There is evidence of some research expertise within the Department and a number of research-related activities/events do regularly take place. There is also evidence of research training for students at both UG and PGT/PGR levels. The research profile of most staff in the Department is not competitive by international standards, in terms of the volume of publications and the credibility of the publication outlets chosen. There is little evidence of external research funding and the level of research support for staff is limited.”

RESPONSE

The above, in our view, **does not reflect the reality** in the Department. More particularly:

- The Department has attracted external funding including the Municipality of Pafos, the Petrideion Foundation, etc.
- The academic staff of the Department is publishing in SCOPUS academic journals as well as journals with an impact factor; Numerous citations are also available in Google Scholar.
- The Department is highly contributing to the Peer Review Journal of DELTOS.
- The University has a very specific research policy with specific references to the support of the new colleagues, especially those in lower rankings, namely lecturers and assistant professor (**Appendix 3**).

The Department produces intense research activity, educates and directs postgraduate students in research. Within this framework:

1. It is responsible for the operation of the History Centre of the Press and Information Office in Paphos, where students are trained to utilise old newspapers (1878-1960) as archival material.
2. It has established at the University the Centre for Modern and Contemporary History which has rich archival material such as (a) Copies of documents of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning Cyprus (approximately 10 thousand documents), (b) A complete copy of the Archive of Cooperation in Cyprus which includes 20,000 documents on the Cooperation in the villages and cities of Cyprus, particularly useful for the study of the social and economic history of Cyprus, (c) Rich material from indexes, copies of documents and publications on the Spanish Civil War, (d) A series of files on the social history of Cyprus.
3. The Centre also has series of Greek and Cypriot magazines and thousands of books on modern and contemporary Cypriot and Greek history.
4. Small research projects on the local history are implemented through the Centre, funded by various municipalities and communities.
5. Doctoral and postgraduate students collaborate in the publication of the quality semester magazine "Deltos" with a content of 200-250 pages, with publishing advisors Professor Pantelis Voutouris of the University of Cyprus, Iakovos Michaelidis of the Aristotle University and Vasilis Kardasis, former President of the Hellenic Open University and Vice Rector of the University of Crete. Each issue includes articles of the teaching staff of the Department.
6. The tutors of the Department present important writing work in important publishing houses and research centres of Greece.

6. Resources

“-More funding is needed for the academic staff research.

-An effort is needed to seek research funding from abroad, especially from the European Union programmes.”

RESPONSE

Done. An ERASMUS+ programme has already been recently submitted in partnership with the Piraeus University. Additionally, members of the Department participate in research proposals submitted under the RESTART Excellence Hub programmes submitted for funding on 2/7.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

We put in serious doubt the validity of the conclusions since they are based on subjective thinking and not on objective observation and facts. Reality is tremendously different and has not been appraised.

«First, there is a mismatch between the disciplinary claims made by the department in the definition of its identity and what it can offer in practice. This is problematic, because a student who would choose to study history or European politics would not be considered to have had adequate and sufficient training in those disciplines if (s)he applied to continue to study those disciplines elsewhere.»

RESPONSE

This is a clear-cut prejudice for which we express our dissatisfaction and disappointment. How it appears “a mismatch between the disciplinary claims made by the department in the definition of its identity and what it can offer in practice”?

The Department is offering a BSc Programme in IR and Security which is further specialised at a postgraduate level with three programmes:

- MSc in International Relations, Strategy and Security;
 - MSc in European Politics and Governance
 - MA in Modern and Contemporary History
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- ✓ History, International Relations and Politics are historically interconnecting disciplines;
 - ✓ Courses’ content focus on modern contemporary issues

Eventually, the focus of the Department is clear and the academic and scientific coherence is well connected and structured.

These are all accredited programmes.

How is it the case that “a student who would choose to study history or European politics would not be considered to have had adequate and sufficient training in those disciplines if (s)he applied to continue to study those disciplines elsewhere.”

If this is the case, then why are our graduates admitted for further studies (Ph.D.) or other postgraduate studies at the University of Cyprus or other public universities?

“Second, the panel considers that there is too much heterogeneity in the student experience. This has multiple causes. For instance, students on some distance learning degrees will effectively take a Neapolis university degree without ever having been taught or supervised by a Neapolis university staff member and this, in turn, makes it very hard to ensure quality control and a consistent and accountable experience. Even though the university can of course stop hiring an associate staff later if students are dissatisfied, this would not really be a clear resolution for the students affected. Similarly, degree structure varies a lot. Some include plenty of choice, others get almost no choice at all.

RESPONSE

Obviously, this not the case. We have already put forward for your appraisal:

1. The Table with the three-member Supervising Committees of the Supervisory Body for the Dissertation, whereby at least one full time NUP academic staff is always participating, and in the majority of the cases two or three full time NUP academic staff are participating.
2. The list of the courses offered together with the Coordinators of each course who happen to be full time NUP academic staff.
3. A list of support and mentoring activities for both our students as well as the Associate staff.

“Third, the provisions for research-lead teaching are insufficient and more broadly the place of research in the department is not always sufficiently clear, be it in terms of the training of doctoral students or even in terms of understanding criteria of “research excellence” as they apply to recruitment and promotion. External funding and publications by staff were also deemed not to be sufficient.

As discussed in our report, some of those issues were partly made more worrying that the panel felt that it did not have access to a sufficient number and diversity of students and that this made it difficult to alleviate some of its worries, notably about the experience of traditional students and those studying in degrees where none of the teaching or mentoring is done by core Neapolis staff.”

RESPONSE

We have explicitly documented that **this is not the case in the Department**, both in terms of the research and teaching correlation as well as the experience students have from NUP permanent staff in the respective DL programmes. Of course, we admit that being a new department more can and has to be done.

“Finally, the panel noted two important elements of equality and diversity. The first is that there is a certain gender imbalance in the department, notably at senior level. This makes the panel’s earlier point about clarity in criteria for excellence in research in recruitment and promotion all the more important. The second is that the panel felt that it would be good for the department to be more reflexive about ensuring that its academic and societal contribution is broad and comprehensive, including in terms of taking into account the specific place of the Turkish-speaking minority as part of Cyprus’s history, politics, and international relations.”

RESPONSE

The issue of attracting the Turkish-speaking minority is an issue that relates to the official policy of the Republic. Thus, not to be commented here.

In relation to the gender issue, NUP has a very specific policy which is applied (**Appendix 10**).



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
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Pantelis Sklias	Rector	
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Date: 09/07/2021

