

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 8/9/2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

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

Programme 1

In Greek:

Πτυχίο στη Ψυχολογία

In English:

Bachelor in Psychology

Programme 2

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό στη Ψυχολογία

In English:

PhD. in Psychology

- **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 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

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

Strengths

- The department has high research productivity and acquires significant amounts of external funding.
- The department offers successful applied programs leading to high graduate employability rates.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- There is room for further expansion of the Department.
- Admission criteria are decided by the Ministry of Education. At present, the number of international students is relatively low. – The Department requires space and equipment renewal, which may require additional funding.

Thank you for the constructive comments and positive evaluation regarding the Department's mission and strategic planning as well as our ability to connect with the society.

As far as your comments in the subarea 1.3 we note that admission criteria remain under the full scope of the Ministry of Education. However, since the discussion related to undergraduate programs taught in English language is currently ongoing, we as a Department are preparing for that opportunity for internationalization when it may become possible. We should also note that we offer several classes in English that attract a large number of Erasmus students.

We share your concern regarding the Department's space and facilities and we are in continuous discussions with university authorities to secure funding for equipment renewal as well additional space. To that end, it should also be noted that our goal for the future is to transfer our laboratories to the main university campus. We hope that plans to build the Faculty's permanent building in the main campus area will soon move forward and this will allow our strategic development to be fully accomplished.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

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

Strengths

- The University's Quality Assurance Policy reinforces the culture of continuous improvement of the University's operations to successfully meet the needs and expectations of students, academics, researchers, administrative staff, partner institutions and the local community.
- The Department establishes committees of undergraduate and postgraduate studies that continuously monitor and revise programmes of study.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Programmes of study are continuously monitored to ensure they are sufficiently meeting the needs of several stakeholders, but once they are rolled out, there is not much horizontal or vertical review among teaching staff. Installing informal ways of discussing course content and teaching and learning methodology with each other may have several benefits, though. It can help to prevent course overlap as well as to build "learning paths" throughout the curriculum that transcend individual courses (e.g., in the interest of supporting student's progress in the development of academic writing skills). Such informal staff exchanges may especially be beneficial for younger staff members, who are in the process of developing teaching skills.

We welcome the constructive comments regarding the department's system and quality assurance strategy.

We acknowledge the committee's concern regarding possible course overlap and their suggestion to implement informal mechanisms to ameliorate that weakness. We can report that this matter is resolved in our new program of study starting September 2025 by offering specific suggestions in terms of which courses students should register for during their program of study. The first three years students take the majority of required courses, and during the fourth year we offer elective courses that do not have overlap. The revised program is designed to focus on diverse areas of psychology with minimum overlap between courses.

As far as the committee's concern regarding facilities and buildings limitations please refer to our comment submitted on 1.3 of this report.

Finally, we are also trying to enhance the role of Academic Advisor in monitoring students' progress and performance based on the individual path of each student. The academic advisor will meet with all students at the beginning of the academic year, and students will have the chance to meet with their advisor during office hours. The department will inform new students at the beginning of the year to inform them about the program of study as well as the role of the academic advisor.

3. Administration

Strengths • The Department has a dedicated and competent administrative staff, who are highly valued by the academic staff.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The EEC's suggestion would be to reconsider the fact that one of the PhD students is a member of the administrative staff, since this may raise some ethical considerations and conflicts of interest.
- The Department aims for more consistent implementation of anti-plagiarism procedures. 16
- From an international perspective, it is unusual to allow students who have passed a course to retake an examination for a higher grade, and it will also lead to grade inflation.

Thank you for your positive feedback.

Following your recommendation, the PhD student is no longer a member of the administrative staff and currently works as a teaching assistant.

Regarding anti-plagiarism procedures the colleagues in the department follow suggestions by the university regarding the use of different tools (e.g., turnitin) available in seral engines, such as the blackboard.

Regarding the committee's comment on students retaking classes for grade improvement, we agree with the concern about grade inflation. However, this procedure is dictated by Central University Regulations.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Strengths

- The undergraduate program of study places an emphasis on cognitive neuroscience courses, which follows international trends in the field of Psychology.
- Academic staff invest significantly in developing the curricula offered to students, not only in relation to the needs of the local community but also in line with international standards.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Academic staff might consider whether some examination procedures (e.g. comprehensive exams in the PhD programme) have the expected learning outcomes and contribute substantially to the assessment of students and to the enhancement of the learning process.

Thank you for your positive feedback regarding learning and teaching.

As for the suggestion related to examination procedures, we follow the University suggestion to evaluate undergraduate students based on two distinct forms of assessment.

Finally, the comprehensive examination for the doctoral programs are now focusing on the students' PhD dissertation. Specifically, all students answer questions related to methodology and statistics. Moreover, students select two theoretical courses and discuss with the academic member in terms of how the course relates to their PhD dissertation. The academic member provide questions that combines information provided in the course and relate to their PhD proposal.

5. Teaching Staff

Strengths.

- It is clear that during the past five years, the department has managed to downsize the ratio of permanent to temporary staff in the programs, which is a good thing. It seems that the reduction of elective courses across the programs has ensured that the number of courses to be organised is more or less inline with staff capacity.
- Teaching staff have strong research profiles and show a great amount of commitment to the Department and its programmes.
- Recent hires with strong profiles further add to the strength of the Department.
- The teaching staff team is cohesive and seems to collaborate well with administrative staff.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- There is room to build further on the strength of the staff by expanding the Department with new hires.

We agree with you that our teaching staff and faculty members have strong research profiles and we welcome your suggestion for additional faculty members. We definitely have several needs in our department in a number of psychology domains. We are currently in the process of recruiting three additional teaching staff in the areas of Clinical Psychology, Counseling Psychology and Methodology. Finally, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education has accepted our request for a strategic academic position in neuroscience, and we are expecting from the University to formally approve the Department's and Faculty's decision.

6. Research

Strengths

- The Department has a strong international research presence.
- The fact that in the newly proposed program the undergraduate thesis is mandatory further adds to the strong research orientation of the program.
- The Department provides continuous opportunities for student involvement in research, which seems to pay off. Students have received Cyprus Youth Organization awards for their research.
- The Department's current research facilities and infrastructure are up to date.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- There is a shortage of space, which limits the further expansion of the research facilities and infrastructure.
- There is concern that there may be a shortage of funding for replacing or updating research infrastructure when needed.
- There are some legal obstacles to collaboration with Turkish Cypriots.

Indeed, our Department has strong international research presence and we share your concern regarding our research facilities and infrastructure. We are currently in the process of updating our research equipment. The department of Psychology has an additional funding of 200,000 euro to buy this equipment.

7. Resources

Strengths

- Resources seem well-managed and the department's position has been enhanced through grant-capture.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- It is challenging to meet the ongoing financial demands of an empirical discipline, including replacement of equipment.
- It is difficult to find funding for PhD students

The committee correctly notes that there is limited funding for doctoral students and that this creates difficulties in their effort to pursue their studies without financial pressures. It also creates barriers in attracting highly competent candidates in various areas of our research expertise. We continuously work in securing either internal funds, such as scholarships and teaching assistant positions, or external resources with faculty research grants.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The Department of Psychology at UCY is a mature department with a strong international research profile and a comprehensive set of degree offerings. All of the 19 faculty are research-active; indicators of research excellence include citation rates and grant capture. There is a plan for a future appointment in neuroscience, and given the department's success, we would expect that a strategically sensible decision would be to grow it further. However, there are challenges to the Department even at its current size, before growth is considered. The first of these is that there are no permanent premises for the Department. Closely related is the fact that psychology is an empirical discipline, which requires equipment and space. At internationally-relevant levels, studies are becoming larger and more complex. Without space and equipment (and replacement of end-of-life equipment), a Psychology Department cannot flourish. It is a testament to the strength of the Department at UCY that they have achieved what they have, but they will find it increasingly difficult to operate at the same level without adequate support. Support includes administrative staff, and it is clear that the Department needs (at least) three full-time administrators to cover its needs. One factor that plays directly into the Department's achievements is the very obvious collegiality that the committee witnessed. This plays out not only in social but in practical terms: Activities are planned together, and there is a sense of continuous improvement—in terms of teaching, for example, the BA has been substantially revised in recent years; there are discussions about how best to measure PhD progress; and there are plans to develop new degrees. The revisions to existing programmes have included the specification of obligatory dissertations, and this leads to our only specific recommendation for change, which is to implement a more detailed workload model for Departmental staff. At present, loads due to dissertation and PhD supervision are not taken into account; nor are the very differing loads that administrative tasks attract. Agreeing on how to take these into account can be a somewhat painful process, but it is vital to make this change to ensure that the very impressive work of the Department is fairly distributed among colleagues

We thank the Evaluation Committee for all the comments, findings, and recommendations. We agree in all areas that can be improved, and we work strategically towards achieving these goals. Of particular importance are the committee's recommendations in relation to buildings, labs, and equipment infrastructure. We work tirelessly with the authorities of the University to implement the plan for permanent building facilities, the further development of our lab areas, and the crucial updating of our equipment.

At the Department of Psychology we are committed to research and teaching excellence along with being a valuable partner in the development of Cyprus society and beyond.

The department works strategically for the future of psychological science in the country, planning its future directions, and recruiting top level staff that share our vision and work towards achieving our goals.

We will work on all areas suggested by the committee as our responses in the subareas above show and we are confident that our Department will sustain its excellence orientation and improve even further.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Kostas Fanti	Professor, Chair of the Department	
FullName	Position	
FullName	Position	
FullName	Position	
FullName	Position	
FullName	Position	

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