ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Doc. 300.3.2
Date: 06/05/2021

Higher Education Institution's Response
(Departmental) - **07.14.313.005**

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

Programme 1
In Greek:
Δημοτική Εκπαίδευση (4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο (BEd))

In English:
Primary Education (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor [BEd]).

Programme 2
In Greek:
Επιστήμες της Αγωγής: Αναλυτικά Προγράμματα και Διδασκαλία (3 ακαδημαϊκά Εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ (MEd))

In English:
Education Studies: Curriculum and Instruction (3 academic semesters, 90 ECTS, Master (MEd))

Programme 3
In Greek:
Εκπαίδευση (3/4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 180/240 ECTS, Διδακτορικό (PhD))

In English:
Education (3/4 academic years, 180/240 ECTS, Doctorate (PhD))

- **Department's Status: Currently Operating**

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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, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

  - *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**

Findings
The Department has a very strong ethos and sense of purpose. It has specific areas of excellence like technology/robotics, mathematics education, theatre/arts and languages, and these feed into offering a rigorous programme of teaching and learning at all levels of the programming. Students at all levels (PhD, MEd C&I conventional, and BEd conventional) are able to describe their experiences in the Department in ways that confirm the Department's mission and values.

Strengths
Student centric education is not only communicated but it is experienced; good relationships between students and faculty; rigorous teaching; financial support for specific cases of need; Robotics Institute; activities that link the Department to various communities.

Areas of improvement and recommendations.

Response

We would like to thank the EEC for their comments and suggestions. The comments in the reports provided, as well as their insights obtained during the frank discussions held throughout the visit have been very helpful.

2. Quality Assurance

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Some scope to widen modes of assessment for Masters students; develop a formal system (currently informal) for monitoring of PhD progress to ensure that those who are taking a break are not lost as numbers expand.

Response:

We accept and agree with the Committee's findings.

Assessment for Master's students:

We have strengthened the field-related-component in all relevant assessment methods. Further, we have focused our efforts more intensely on in-classroom discussions to link theory and practice, through short tasks and the readings assigned to the students. Importantly, special attention has been placed on assigning students' work which they can mostly relate, having in mind who they are, their professional and personal backgrounds, and the content knowledge that needs to be acquired in each course.

Monitoring PhD progress:

As per the recommendation of the committee, and in order to systemize a process for monitoring PhD progress, we have amended the formal procedures as follows, with immediate effect from the Fall 2021 semester.

Each semester the supervisor and doctoral student discuss the progress achieved and reflect this in a brief report which is submitted to the PhD Program Coordinator. This method is a complimentary way to track the student progress effectively. It is noted that, since the beginning of the program, no problems had occurred regarding the monitoring of PhD student progress, but we acknowledge that the specific process suggested will be helpful, especially in the case of changing supervisors and/or in the case a PhD student takes a hiatus from his/her studies.

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3. Administration

Findings

These aspects, as far as we could see from our virtual visit and the paperwork were all in place.

Strengths

There is a close link between the Department, the School and the central administration of the University. This is an efficient and effective set of governance arrangements (often this is not the case) and might be a reflection of size.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Response:

We thank the EEC for its findings. We don't have any further comments to add in our response.

4. Learning and Teaching

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **4.1 Planning the programmes of study**
> **4.2 Organisation of teaching**

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The integration of theory and practice could be enhanced, not only in the teacher education programme but as a means of realising the student-centred approach that is part of the mission of the university. As it is now. it depends on the teachers and students, and because of the small student groups this works well. But a vision at department level on the integration of theory and practice, could support the teachers in the programme with projects and tasks that are relevant for both academia and society.

Response:

Regarding the BEd in Primary Education, as per the recommendations of the EEC, the following actions were discussed and approved by the Department in order to enhance the connection between theory and practice:

a) Courses that run parallel to the teaching practicum at the third and fourth year of study, should include activities that require students to bring into the course teaching issues around the particular course. Most of the courses in the third and four year of study are courses around the didactics of a particular subject area of the school curriculum.
b) Participation from Faculty members in the seminars that take place at the University before the beginning of the school practice at the third and fourth year of study will be increased.
c) Faculty members will visit schools and assess students during their third and fourth year of study along with the tutor responsible for the teaching practicum.

Regarding the other programmes of study of the Department, it was decided that the most effective course of action is to request from faculty members to incorporate targeted activities in their teaching that address this connection. The monitoring of the implementation of such actions is conducted through the Internal Quality Assurance Course Evaluation Report where the actions taken should be reflected.

5. **Teaching Staff**

Areas of improvement and recommendations
One of the main challenges that may present in the future would relate to sustaining this high level of support for students in terms of high levels of staff engagement if number were to grow on the different courses. It would be important that the staff prepare for increased student numbers in a planned and proactive way in order to ensure that support is maintained in a way that is proportionate to the capacity of staff to meet future demands.

Response:
The Department prides itself for being a student-center department, following the University's stated strategic goal as a whole. Different central university services (such as the Studies and Student welfare service) support students' needs in collaboration with the Departments. Through those services, the Department has the necessary mechanisms to support any future increase in student numbers.

At present, as noted, the academic staff profile fully meets the current requirements by the students. The EEC correctly identifies that, should the number of students significantly increase, these human resources may not be adequate to support the same level of service. The University has in place efficient mechanisms to address such an event. Firstly, the Department has the capability through fast track internal mechanisms to hire qualified staff in a visiting/short-term capacity so as to cover any demand increase. These mechanisms allow for specific calls for academics in given fields and short-term contracts can be offered relatively fast, ensuring at the same time that the selection process is transparent and that quality criteria are met. Furthermore, the Department, following the existing university policies, can request from the Senate approval for elected faculty positions in specific scientific domains. Such open calls are then announced and due procedure is followed for election of candidates as per the University's regulations, inline with international practices. These requests for elected positions are part of the Department's medium-term planning and strategic direction, as this is formulated in its strategic plan that is discussed and agreed with the competent university authorities.

6. Research

Areas of improvement and recommendations
Procedures could be installed to stimulate not only academic output (conferences, journal articles), but relevance of research for society as well

Response:

To address the above recommendation, as discussed during a departmental council meeting, faculty members involved in research will be invited to participate / organize events for society to disseminate their results. The Department aims to organize at least two such events on a yearly base. This goal is already incorporated in the short-term goals of the Department's strategic plan and will be assessed annually. If needed, corrective actions will take place.

Regarding the quality indicator:

Quality Indicators/criteria		1-5
6.4	The Department has the appropriate mechanisms for the development of students' research skills.	3

To enhance student's research skills, it was decided that appropriate activities are specifically incorporated into courses of the third and fourth year of study in the undergraduates programmes of study and into the courses in all postgraduate programmes of study. In particular, all instructors will need to incorporate the aforementioned activities in their courses and document this in the Internal Quality Course Evaluation Report. These reports are completed every year for each course and submitted to the coordinators of the programmes. If corrective actions need to take place, the coordinators will oversee these.

7. Resources

Findings

We engaged in a number of conversations on the level of resourcing for this Department. It is clear that this is not an issue for staff and that they feel very well supported by the University. Many staff spoke openly and with strong conviction about their high level of job satisfaction and their overall contentment working in the University. This is a very positive outcome for the University, the Department and the students.

Strengths

High level of staff morale • Level of resourcing for the Department • The creation of space to review programmes in an ongoing and proactive way • A sense of long-term, strategic commitment to ideals related to particular areas and strengths both in the Department and in the University • Low student numbers and the support of part-time teachers in online /distance learning courses • The manner in which programme and module leadership is always the responsibility of a permeant member of staff ensuring that quality control is always maintained.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Response:

We thank the EEC for its findings. We don't have any further comments to add in our response.

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

There is a clear vision at the level of the University around a student-centric approach to the overall programme offer. Students experience this and the Department espouses it. This is very gratifying to see. Strategic planning cycles and quality review cycles are evident. The governance structures which involve students are robust. There is evidence of very good to excellent practice in the Department regarding its overall organization and in relation to its programs. The leadership is effective and also has a sense of how to address the inevitable challenges that it is facing. Faculty are active in research communities, in securing research funds, and in publishing

Response:

We would again like to thank the EEC for their comments. We are particularly glad that the EEC has been positive in its assessment and we would like to thank them again for their invaluable inputs and points for improvement raised during the virtual visit. We have considered all their suggestions in depth and believe that we have taken appropriate remedial actions. We strive in the future to further improve our operations in all areas.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Prof. George Demosthenous	Rector	

Date 06/05/2021