

Doc. 300.3.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

Date:

- **Higher Education Institution:**
American University of Beirut Mediterraneo
- **Town:** Paphos
- **School/Faculty:** Faculty of Arts and Sciences
- **Department:** Psychology
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (4 years, 240 ECTS, BSc)

Programme 1

In Greek:

Ψυχολογία (4 χρόνια, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Psychology (4 years/240 ECTS), BSc

Programme 2

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

Programme 3

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

- **Department's Status:** Choose status



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

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating [scores of 4-5] of this section and the quality indicators of its three sub-areas.

We first tackle the section's Findings, Strengths, and Areas of improvement and recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC:

“All ratings above reflect the plans for a department which does not yet exist as such. However, the planned department is a close analogue of an existing department at AUB with a long history of successful governance. Relevant processes have been inherited from this “mother” department.”

EEC noted also that ***“We were particularly impressed with plans to continue AUB’s very strong record of connecting with society, for example the refugee-track initiatives which are clearly having an impact in Beirut and beyond.”***

The EEC did not suggest areas for improvements or recommendations.

Institutions Response: We thank the EEC for their positive feedback.

2) Sub-areas section comments

EEC comments Re: 1.2.2-Connecting With Society: *“The website is currently under construction. The “mother” department at AUB has an impressive record of civic engagement, and there are plans to continue in the same vein at AUBM”.*

Institution’s Response: AUB Mediterraneo developed and launched a fully-fledged website for the university that includes information on the department, the programs and the relevant courses per term and per year: <https://aubmediterraneo.cy/>. In addition, the university created already social media pages on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#). The university confirms that every department will have its own page on the website to include information specific to the department.

EEC comments Re 1.3-Development Processes: *“The panel note that requiring students to spend time in Beirut may act as a recruitment disincentive. The projected intake of students is 20/year. AUB has 23% international students, but we did not see projections for AUBM.”*



Institution's Response: The engagement of AUB Mediterraneo students at AUB campus in Beirut is designed in a flexible manner as a benefit and an “incentive” in the form of student exchange to engage students in an experiential learning and research. The visit can take various forms such as research visit, engagement in community-based learning, internship, or taking courses. Students will have the chance to experience the student life at AUB and enhance their cross-cultural communication and engagement. As for the percent of international students, the performed market analysis indicate the students of AUB Mediterraneo would come from Cyprus, Greece, Gulf countries, and some European and Asian countries.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

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

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating [scores of 4-5, and two 3s] of this section and the quality indicators of its two sub-areas.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of improvement and recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC:

“AUB has a strongly supportive culture with carefully thought-through QA, and we expect this to be reflected in AUBM. Most support services are centrally provisioned, and this makes sense given the relatively small size of the department. Likewise, the VITA system is a noteworthy planning instrument that has been completed all the way up to 2032.” “A very strong QA programme is in place at AUB, as presented to the panel.”

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: *“Students at AUB raised a couple of issues with the Advisor system, but they appear to be well-supported on the whole and we expect this to replicate in AUBM. We note that faculty at AUBM are likely to consist primarily of new hires, which may also have implications for their ability to act as Advisors. We note that at full strength, AUBM will be introducing circa 2000 young people from multiple cultures into the Paphos population, and sensitivity will be required in making this change to the local demographic. The intention to provide a “holistic experience” to student life will require consistent attention, and AUBM appears to be conscious of this need”.*

Institution’s Response: Faculty members serving as advisors, including new hires, will undergo mandatory training to be aware of and advise properly students on university policies and procedures, program/major requirements, university resources, discrimination and harassment. The training will also offer faculty members the means to provide support to available students with special needs, personally and contextually [relevant to location and culture]. There will also be a survey to be filled by students evaluating their advisors administered once a year after the advising sessions during the spring term. The result of the survey will be accessible by chairpersons, Dean’s office, and the Rectors office for decision on improvement plans.

2) Sub-areas section comments

EEC Comments Re 2.2.12-The Department analyses and publishes graduate employment information: *“We did not see any evidence that graduate destinations were published (for AUB)”.*

Institution's Response: The Department will develop an effective strategy to collect graduate employment data and publish it on its website for all psychology graduates of AUB Mediterraneo. For that purpose, the Department will also consult with AUB Mediterraneo's Office of Student Affairs.

The following career paths were published already on the website:

1. Typical psychology careers:

- Careers in healthcare and therapy
 - Chartered psychologist
 - Psychotherapist
 - Social worker
 - Counselor

- Careers in education
 - Educational psychologist
 - School psychologist
 - School teacher

- Careers in research
 - Scientist in various agencies (government, universities, companies, charities, NGOs) and in various roles (from research assistant to principal investigator, dependent on further qualifications)

2. Less typical careers with a psychology degree:

- Human resources
- Media and communications
- Criminal justice and rehabilitation
- Advertising and marketing
- Business and management
- Sports
- Public agencies
- The legal sector

EEC Comments Re 2.2.13.2-Library: *“The library appears to be primarily online, and in the growing phase will be combined with a student study space (as per Annex 4/7). It is very well stocked but there was a lack of clarity about how, for example, a new textbook would be provided for students”.*

Institution's Response: In addition to providing the faculty and students with the needed online resources and e-books to facilitate teaching and research, the library also facilitates the procurement of local and foreign books, teaching materials, and paraphernalia. The library coordinates with every department to identify the books needed for teaching and the expected number of books. The library then procures for them whether the books were online or hard copy, and provides them to the students at cost. The library will also join the Cyprus Libraries Consortium to tap into its resources and also to contribute to it with the valuable resources at AUB Mediterraneo and AUB.

3. Administration

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “Compliant” rating [scores of 5] of this section and the quality indicators without making any areas for improvement or recommendations.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC:

“The department in AUB appears to be well-run, with staff meetings operating on Roberts Rules. Staff are fully involved in decision-making processes. And that they “were genuinely impressed by the expertise, sense of ownership, and motivation of the collective of staff members present at the meeting. Generally, a sense of bottom-up governance and participation was evident from the meeting”.

The EEC did not suggest areas for improvements or recommendations.

Institutions Response: We thank the EEC for their positive feedback.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating [scores of 4-5] of this section and the quality indicators of its two sub-areas.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC:

“AUB has an established programme in Psychology and the AUBM plans are predicated on this. The learning and teaching plans are coherent and there is every reason to assume that they will be successfully executed.” “The Department documented a convincing system for designing, approving, monitoring and periodically reviewing the programmes of study, and all stakeholders are involved”.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: *“There is a chance to build on AUB’s excellent societal engagement through the curriculum, perhaps through an “outreach”-style course, thus ensuring an integration of practice and theory in the psychology programme.”*

Institution’s Response: The Department will consider adding an “outreach”-style course (for credit) to further strengthen the integration of practice and theory.

5. Teaching Staff

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section and the quality indicators without making any areas for improvement or recommendations.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC:

“The Department has presented a comprehensive staffing plan, but most faculty are still to be recruited. However, the three (content-wise slightly overlapping, for continuity) faculty per specialisation strategy seems sensible and doable”.

The EEC noted also that ***“The new hire for Clinical Psychology seemed very strong to the entire panel, and AUBM is to be congratulated on this appointment. This suggests that it will be possible to attract high-quality candidates to the remaining open positions, especially given the attractive remuneration package”.***

The EEC did not suggest areas for improvements or recommendations.

Institutions Response: We thank the EEC for their positive feedback. The current faculty members are sufficient for the first two years. During the first two years, new faculty members will be hired based on the outlined staffing plan to secure the teaching needs in the later years and also to strengthen the research portfolio of the department. The university will all also make use of visiting professors to diversify the faculty body, continuously inject new research perspectives, and enhance collaboration.

6. Research

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section and the quality indicators without making any areas for improvement or recommendations.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC:

“In the establishment phase of this department, the focus is clearly on teaching, through the creation of a new degree programme. However, the institution and department aim to support research and professors’ time is appropriately allocated, on a 40/40/20 model. There is an intention to provide eye-tracking and EEG support in the first instance”.

EEC noted also that ***“We note that the “special topics” options appear to reflect the research interests of current staff at AUB, and we expect this to be reflected in AUBM. As noted before, some of the civic engagement initiatives also provide excellent opportunities for unique, societally relevant research”.***

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: *“Some of the questions will be more completely answerable when recruitment is completed”.*

Institutions Response: We thank the EEC for their positive feedback.

7. Resources

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section and the quality indicators without making any areas for improvement or recommendations.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: “***The AUBM seems to be in good shape from a resource perspective, and periodical external financial audits have been secured (appendix 18)***” and that “***The systematic risk assessment appears to be particularly comprehensive***”.

The EEC did not suggest areas for improvements or recommendations.

Institutions Response: We thank the EEC for their positive feedback.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

EEC conclusions and final remarks:

“The department of Psychology does not yet exist in AUBM. However, its structure, processes, and degree programme are closely modelled on those of AUB, and a particular strength of this application is that there is considerable expertise and resource in Beirut to be drawn on as the department is established.

Although the faculty for the new department have not yet been fully hired, there is a comprehensive hiring plan (and early signs are that this will be successful). The processes for management, decision-making, QA, and course design are all comprehensively documented. Student recruitment plans are advanced, and we expect AUBM to begin to recruit successfully. We note however that the requirement for students to spend time in Beirut may be a disincentive to students with commitments which prevent travel.

There is a desire to ensure that the department is research-active, and some initial plans for relevant structural support (EEG, eyetracking) are in place. As faculty are hired, it will be important to protect their research time, and to ensure that relevant facilities, financial support and equipment are available.

AUB has a unique and impressive societal engagement, and we hope that this will be reflected in AUBM. There is an opportunity here to plan such engagement into the curriculum, helping students integrate theory with practice, as well as ensuring that AUBM has local, as well as potential international, impact.

One aspect of the visit noted by all panel members was the enthusiasm for the project and the sense of collegiality among the representatives of AUB and AUBM that we met. This reflects well on AUB, and speaks to a successful future for Psychology in AUBM”.

Institution’s Response: The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo expresses its sincere gratitude and appreciation to the members of the External Evaluation Committee for their time and effort in *this thoughtful review*. The university welcomes the EEC’s suggested areas for improvements in its Evaluation Report that aim for the assurance of continuous improvement. The Department is particularly pleased/satisfied by getting “Compliant” rating by the EEC in all 7 areas (total 16 sub-areas). The University has accepted the constructive comments and suggested areas for improvements put forward, and will address them during the implementation phase.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature	
Dr. Wassim El Hajj	Rector		
Dr. Arne Dietrich	Vice-Rector and Psychology Dept. Chairperson		
Mrs. Rania Hussein	Strategy and Risk		
Mrs. Boushra Rahal	Quality Assurance and Institutional Improvement		
FullName	Position		
FullName			

Date: December 27, 2022

