

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 04 July 2025

Higher Education Institution's Response (Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
UNIC Athens
- **Town:** Athens
- **School/Faculty:** Medical School
- **Department:** Basic and Clinical Sciences
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1

In Greek:

Ιατρική (6 έτη, 360 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Doctor of Medicine (6 years, 360 ECTS, Undergraduate medical degree)

Programme 2

In Greek:

Ιατρική (5 έτη, 300 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Doctor of Medicine (5 years, 300 ECTS, graduate-entry, Undergraduate medical degree)

Programme 3

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό στις Ιατρικές Επιστήμες (3 Έτη / 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)

In English:

Doctoral Degree (PhD) in Medical Sciences (3 years / 180 ECTS, Doctoral Programme)

Department's Status: New



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

Quality indicators/criteria Findings

1.1 Mission and strategic planning: All indicators are compliant. It is probably unrealistic for a department that is so new to have detailed long-term objectives, but the aims and capabilities of the academic staff we met with to build a collaborative workforce for education and research in the context of clinical practice were clear.

The new department is certainly well-placed to deliver the newly-designed 6-year MD programme which was excellently described to us in Cyprus in great detail, and which we also reviewed for the Athens branch.

It is clear that the PhD in Medical Sciences is a critical component for the success of the department, who are well placed to excel in this area.

At this emergent point in the new department and branch, we are of the opinion that the 5 year MD is a little less compatible - for two reasons. Firstly, although a good programme, it has yet to benefit from the lived experience of the newly-improved 6 year MD - there are developments from this that would also improve the 5-year programme. Secondly, because of overlapping staff, in the context of a new branch, a focus on a single MD (at least to start with) may be the wiser approach to maximise standing of the programme at the end of the first year.

We have been told that six schools are starting in the branch this September delivering 12 programmes. There are tremendous synergies with the other schools - Business, Law, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science & Engineering, Life & Health Sciences. We recommend that the department maximises on opportunities in interprofessional and transdisciplinary education and research. This is often easier to do "by design" than through retrospective timetable arrangements, but the branch campus is an ideal position to do this in the next year.

We would suggest that a short delay in the delivery of the 5-year MD, perhaps until the main campus is complete in 2028, would make for a smoother roll out of the programmes within the department.

1.2 Connecting with society: Before accreditation, the department is not in a position where its new programmes can be advertised to the public. Also, as there are no graduates yet, there can't be effective communication mechanisms in place, yet. Given our experience of all these aspects at the Cyprus campus, we anticipate it will not be a concern once accreditation has been confirmed.

1.3 Development processes: We met with 8 of the 16 new faculty in the process of being recruited for the first year of operations. They are all impressive and tremendously enthusiastic. UNIC has done well to recruit them.

We understand from the documentation and our conversations that seed funds are available to support incoming academics in re-establishing their existing research, and in driving the research of others.

We have been advised that the student numbers for the first year will be up to 180 medical students and a minimum of 3 students on the PhD programme. We anticipate that PhD numbers will grow rapidly, recognising the expertise of academics. We have advised that medical student numbers should be less ambitious in the first year, especially given the point we are now at in the academic cycle. Starting with a cohort of 100 medical students total would be wiser, in our view.

We understand that most medical students are likely to be Greek or Cypriot in nationality, recognising that there are currently students from approximately 90 countries within the parent department. We would anticipate a similar exciting spread of nationalities with time.

Findings

There is a strategic plan for recruitment of academics within the department, this is achievable and the recruits we have met with are of excellent calibre. We understand that there will be between 16 and 22 academics within the first year, some of whom have corresponding clinical appointments within the nearby HHG hospitals. This provides excellent stability - and will benefit the Nicosia branch students on placement at HHG hospitals in addition to new Athens branch students. This mixture of “old and new” students, and faculty who are/were Nicosia-based, newly recruited, and already familiar because of pre-existing clinical commitments provides for a reassuring context with which to launch the new department.

There are, in addition, excellent administrative staff, recruited locally, working well with their counterparts in Nicosia who provide training and ongoing support. This cross-over of administrative capacity (with frequent visits) again puts the department in an excellent position for the autumn.

Strengths

UNIC Athens campus has excellent academics who are in the process of being formally appointed, and there is a palpable enthusiasm across all members of academic and administrative staff.

Students and staff will be involved with varying degrees of prior experience of the “UNIC way”. This will provide for innovation and growth while maintaining UNIC values and culture which are key for success.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

We are sure that administrative and academic staff from Nicosia will continue in their faculty development processes (well supported by HEAL) - and on this basis there are no concerns.

UNIC Athens response:

We thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their positive report and for finding the proposed Department of Basic and Clinical Sciences at UNIC Athens to be compliant in all three sub-areas in relation to the Department’s academic profile and orientation.

We concur with the EEC’s view that, before accreditation, the department is not in a position to advertise its new programmes to the public, and that, since there are no graduates yet, effective communication mechanisms cannot be in place. However, as noted also by the EEC, given our experience of all these aspects at UNIC in Cyprus, this should not be a concern once accreditation has been confirmed.

We would like to clarify that our plan in respect to faculty is to have 22 members of Teaching & Research Faculty hired in the first year, to be on campus. Further, an additional 46 faculty, that have already been appointed as clinical faculty of the School, and that are based within the Hellenic Healthcare Group of hospitals, will be in place from the outset, totalling 68 faculty in the first academic year.

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
1.1 Mission and strategic planning	Compliant
1.2 Connecting with society	Compliant
1.3 Development processes	Compliant

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

2.1 System and quality assurance strategy

2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

Quality indicators/criteria Findings

2.1 System and quality assurance strategy: The culture of both the parent and branch campus departments is tremendous and faculty have demonstrated the emphasis they place on these in terms of equality, diversity and inclusive practice.

We are happy that all elements of QA with regard to research will be compliant, but have been a little cautious here given that new faculty are yet to start.

Connection with society will be more apparent as the project becomes live - but we have heard from HHG colleagues and students how the majority of patients in HHG hospitals are happy to be cared for by Nicosia branch medical students.

The Nicosia branch students we met were extremely positive regarding their experience learning at HHG hospitals. Notably, there was greater emphasis on their desire to stay within the Greek / Cypriot healthcare system if possible.

2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study: The new medical school building will be exceptional when completed, in an environment that is likely second to none in Europe. We were convinced during our tour that it will be finished before the programmes start in autumn - but have nonetheless scored them as partially compliant as they are not yet complete. We would welcome the opportunity to review them in the near future, if required.

Doctoral studies regulations are publicly available related to the Cyprus branch, as we have previously described, it is not yet acceptable for them to be publicly available for the Athens branch.

We look forward to hearing about the successes and number of doctoral studies students – we anticipate that this will be very successful but it is a little early to provide full marks in this area.

Findings

The department is very well-placed, as is the medical school to excel. This is due broadly, to four factors:

1. The Cyprus branch, its campus and values / culture, so well established by the leadership.
2. The natural partnership with HHG, who already provide excellent learning opportunities for UNIC students and understand the “UNIC way”.
3. The enthusiasm and expertise of both academic and administrative staff who together are committed to the branch campus as a whole, and its flagship medical school a success.
4. The inspirational new building and its context which will set the tone for the future of medical education, potentially across Europe.

Strengths

Please see above.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

We would welcome the opportunity to confirm the excellent facilities once they are complete, but consider the department compliant aside from this. The procedures and practises transcribed from the Nicosia campus are excellent.

UNIC Athens response:

We thank the EEC for recognising that we plan, in partnership with HHG, to replicate the same ethos, values and culture in place in Nicosia to the Department at the UNIC Athens campus.

We appreciate the EEC's view that the new medical school building will be exceptional when completed, in an environment that is likely to be second to none in the region. We believe this will stand us in good stead for the future and look forward to welcoming the EEC, as indicated to us, in late November / early December to view the operation of the new facilities.

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
2.1 System and quality assurance strategy	Compliant
2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study	Compliant

3. Administration

Quality indicators/criteria Findings

3. Administration: The model set by the Nicosia Campus, and the explanation around governance indicate that all is/ will be compliant. The department, as such, is not yet in a position to have had meetings or held minutes - but given the procedures in place we do not anticipate that this will be anything other than compliant. The model set for the Athens branch is certainly around appropriate academic engagement, and new faculty members will certainly be inducted for this appropriately, but the reality here has to be a little uncertain given the situation, hence a minor down-grade.

Findings

We are confident that the department of the branch campus will accurately mirror and learn from that of the Nicosia campus, given the processes in place and the close ways of working and training between long-standing Nicosia and (largely) newly recruited Athens branch academic and professional services staff.

All are clear that departmental policies and ways of working are transplanted from the pre-existing excellent Nicosia model.

Strengths

Please see above.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

None of concern.

UNIC Athens response:

We are pleased that the EEC have scored the administration with fours and fives throughout the quality indicators and for documenting this area as compliant. We are confident of our position, on the basis of how the Nicosia campus will be transcribed to the UNIC Athens campus, in regard to the administrative functions of the department.

Assessment area	Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant
3. Administration	Compliant

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Quality indicators/criteria Findings

4.1 Planning the programmes of study: Given the practices of the Nicosia branch, there are no concerns.

4.2 Organisation of teaching: Given the experience with the Nicosia programme, the EEC feels confident that all successful hallmarks of the Cyprus teaching will be adopted.

Findings

We have no concerns in this area. The Nicosia campus approach is solid and will translate well to the Athens branch. We have applied a minor degree of caution regarding the timing and effectiveness of Athens branch teaching staff feedback merely to recognise that most teaching staff will be new to the Athens branch. While we do not predict any concerns, this is yet to be a “lived” judgement.

Strengths

Please see above.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

N/A

UNIC Athens response:

We appreciate the EEC’s positive comments about the existing and planned campus.

Sub-area	Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant
4.1 Planning the programmes of study	Compliant
4.2 Organisation of teaching	Compliant

5. Teaching Staff

Quality indicators/criteria Findings

5. Teaching staff We have yet to see special teaching staff numbers in reality due to the programme being yet to staff, hence partial compliance scoring. Given the experience of Nicosia campus students in HHG hospitals, we have no major concerns in this area.

Given that this programme is yet to start, it is difficult to give full numbers across all areas requested here. We have no concerns, especially given the expertise of those who have been delivering education to Nicosia branch campus medical students for many years.

Findings

We understand that the planned new faculty members, many of whom we met during our visit, are yet to have contracts of employment - so there is a little uncertainty in this regard. The procedures and practices that are being fully transferred from the Nicosia campus are excellent. Special teaching staff and visiting professor details are still pending.

Strengths

As an example of how to implement a branch campus department, this model is very impressive.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

No concerns.

UNIC Athens response:

We thank the EEC for noting our model for implementation as 'very impressive'. As was explained, the development of the Department, and indeed the campus as a whole in Athens, has been realized through the determination of all involved, including significant input on the part of our existing clinical partner in Athens, the Hellenic Healthcare Group.

As noted by the EEC, we are not yet in a position to provide full contracts of employment to faculty, based on existing law, and we appreciate that until such time as we are, some hesitation may be felt by the faculty. However, upon approval of the Campus by the regulatory authorities, the Preliminary Acceptance Letter that each has signed will be replaced by a contract of employment.

We expect our teaching faculty to grow in numbers over the coming years, in line with the roll-out of the curricula and the research priorities of the School and Department at Campus. As part of this both Special Teaching Staff and Visiting Professors will join the team.

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
5.1 Teaching staff number, adequacy and suitability	Compliant
5.2 Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially compliant
5.3 Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

6. Research

Quality indicators/criteria Findings

6. Research: N/A

Findings

The framework for research at UNIC Health/Medical School is identical, being the very same university. Since it was explained and laid out in detail during the visit preceding the visit to the Athens branch, it was only explained briefly. It was explained in great detail to the EEC how UNIC is governing the operations in Athens.

Strengths

Since the department is the same as in UNIC Cyprus, regulations, procedures and support etc. are the same.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

Cannot be evaluated pending the start of any of the schools.

UNIC Athens response:

We recognise that it is difficult for the EEC to provide further assessment of our Research plans at this stage of the School at UNIC Athens' development and we welcome your acknowledgement of the advantages offered by the research environment in Athens, our success in recruiting research-active faculty — including members of the Greek academic diaspora — and the value added by our partnership with the Hellenic Healthcare Group and our new laboratory facilities.

The comprehensive Research Strategy in place in Nicosia will be transcribed to the new department, and we welcome the benefits that the research focus and expertise of the new faculty will bring. The research record of the new faculty is significant, in terms of output and impact, as demonstrated in their CVs and research profiles, and is indicative of the impact that we believe they will bring to the new department and in achieving the aims of our research strategy.

Further, the branch campus will naturally engage with the School- and University-wide initiatives and, in particular, with the NEOLAIA European University Alliance, thereby enabling the UNIC Athens campus to contribute to, and benefit from, a shared research ecosystem.

Assessment area	Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant
6.1 Research mechanisms and regulations	Compliant
6.2 External and internal funding	Compliant
6.3 Motives for research	Compliant
6.4 Publications	Partially compliant

7. Resources

Quality indicators/criteria Findings

7. Resources: Much of the scoring in this above section is based upon the situation at the Nicosia campus, given the emergent state of the Athens branch campus.

Findings

According to the budget provided, resources for the planned operations are appropriate. The QA for the department is identical to and transplanted from UNIC Cyprus.

Strengths

The resources, both financial and otherwise, appear appropriate for the planned operations.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

Cannot be evaluated pending start of any of the operations.

UNIC Athens response:

We are pleased that the EEC recognise appropriate resources are in place for the new department, whilst recognising that they are not yet able to provide further assessment of this area.

Assessment area	Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant
7. Resources	Compliant

B. Conclusions and final remarks

We would firstly like to congratulate the UNIC team and their long-term partners within Hellenic Healthcare Group in this excellent development to increase the depth and breadth of clinical academia and practise in Greece. Building on the success of years 5 and 6 of the MD programs, which started in 2018, creates a natural partnership and is to be celebrated.

The ambitious project to launch a strategic educational partnership involving six schools but focussed around the medical school has tremendous merit and has been well planned by all partners over the last year. Particular congratulations are due to Professor Charalambous for his inclusive leadership of this project; noting how he has inspired, with Prof. Ioannides, the excellent academic team at the Nicosia branch to develop a forward looking 6-year MD programme which will be implemented at both campuses.

UNIC took extra care to explain the transplantation of their well-functioning operations in Cyprus. It is reasonable to trust them being able to perform this transfer based on the expertise presented and the staff (both academic and administrative) to execute it. The governance structure will ensure that UNIC Cyprus is in full control of the operations in Athens.

We have a number of commendations:

1. The transplantation of all administrative and academic services including the excellent student support and quality assurance processes to the branch.
2. The palpable enthusiasm within the clinical community is invaluable.
3. The commitment to a high-specification new medical building, integrated into the existing healthcare ecosystem will create a flagship model for the future.
4. The commitment that both institutions have shown each other in their future commercial and governance structure.
5. We commend the university for early roll-out of a PhD programme to support the ambition of HHG clinicians and UNIC academics.

We also have a number of recommendations:

1. That the medical school gears itself for success. We would strongly suggest that the medical school starts with a maximum of about 100 MD students, rather than up to 180, which we feel would be an unnecessary risk for a new department, despite their excellent preparation, academic and administrative staff and previous expertise at HHG. This is also to marshall the expansion in the clinical areas to support the experience of pre-existing Nicosia students.
2. It is likely that the project could be further de-risked by all 100 MD students being on the 6-year MD, with the 5-year programme being rolled out potentially when the campus is complete in 2028, and the 5-year model has benefitted from more of the new 6-year programme innovation.

An expansion of numbers up to approximately 180 as currently stated, could be staged effectively over the next few years, accordingly.

3. That a more complete consideration of the opportunities and threats of the branch campus development is undertaken, so that the risks can be appropriately marshalled and mitigated by the

newly formed academic and administrative teams. This should include planning for contingency arrangements.

4. We are very supportive of this initiative progressing across MD and PhD programmes. It may be wise for an early formal review of the facilities once the medical school building has been completed, which we would be delighted to contribute to, if appropriate.

5. The branch campus creates rich opportunities across six schools and programmes, with excellent new faculty, to maximise on interprofessional and transdisciplinary education and research – this is often easier to do “by design” than through retrospective timetable arrangements.

6. Lastly, recognising the unique capabilities and position of HHG, alongside UNIC, we would encourage HEAL and the partnership to continue to proactively and strategically engage with the government and thought leaders to develop junior medical training opportunities (residency programme) within the private healthcare system, for the benefit of healthcare in Greece.

UNIC Athens response:

We thank the EEC for their considered evaluation of the Department of Basic and Clinical Sciences at UNIC Athens, and for their positive report, including five commendations. We address their recommendations in the following paragraphs:

That the medical school gears itself for success. We would strongly suggest that the medical school starts with a maximum of about 100 MD students, rather than up to 180, which we feel would be an unnecessary risk for a new department, despite their excellent preparation, academic and administrative staff and previous expertise at HHG. This is also to marshall the expansion in the clinical areas to support the experience of pre-existing Nicosia students.

We thank the EEC for recognising the quality of academic and administrative staff and UNIC’s relevant preparations. Originally, our plans for academic year 2025-26 included delivery of the 5-year Doctor of Medicine (MD) programme, hence a maximum number of 180 students (cumulative with the 6-year MD programme). Considering we will not operate the 5-year MD programme in the first year, we will aim for a maximum of 100 6-year MD programme students.

It is likely that the project could be further de-risked by all 100 MD students being on the 6-year MD, with the 5-year programme being rolled out potentially when the campus is complete in 2028, and the 5-year model has benefitted from more of the new 6-year programme innovation. An expansion of numbers up to approximately 180 as currently stated, could be staged effectively over the next few years, accordingly.

We agree with the EEC’s recommendation and, as indicated during the visit, we will only launch the 6-year Doctor of Medicine programme in the academic year 2025-26. Our plan is to launch the 5-year MD programme in Athens in 2026-27, which will allow us to recruit the international students that this programme applies to predominantly, since graduate-entry programmes are the norm in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand (and other countries worldwide).

That a more complete consideration of the opportunities and threats of the branch campus development is undertaken, so that the risks can be appropriately marshalled and mitigated

by the newly formed academic and administrative teams. This should include planning for contingency arrangements.

We agree that a comprehensive appraisal of the opportunities and threats, including those that are not under our control, is essential for a credible SWOT analysis and for effective development of the Medical School at UNIC Athens.

We have already made strides towards this by enhancing sections of the School's SWOT analysis, including for example, a reference to the potential for global and/or regional instability to impact our abilities to effectively recruit students across our programmes.

We are committed to maintaining mechanisms that allow us to update and refresh SWOT analyses across our activities (e.g., at programme, department and school levels), and so that new risks are identified in a timely manner. We believe that in doing so, we will strengthen across the four pillars of our activity (teaching, research, social responsibility and internationalisation) and demonstrate transparency.

We are very supportive of this initiative progressing across MD and PhD programmes. It may be wise for an early formal review of the facilities once the medical school building has been completed, which we would be delighted to contribute to, if appropriate.

As has been conveyed, we thank the EEC for their support. As indicated during the visit, and based on their availability, we look forward to welcoming them in late November / early December to view the operations of the new campus.

The branch campus creates rich opportunities across six schools and programmes, with excellent new faculty, to maximise on interprofessional and transdisciplinary education and research – this is often easier to do “by design” than through retrospective timetable arrangements.

We thank the EEC for acknowledging the rich IPL opportunities at UNIC Athens. We agree that interprofessional education is an integral component of medical education. The MD programmes have an IPL stream that runs longitudinally throughout all years of the programme and learning objectives have systematically been embedded in the MD programmes. Guided by our IPL Strategic Plan under the leadership of the IPL Academic Lead, we have systematically covered the IPL learning objectives through educational activities across all years of the programmes. The opportunities at UNIC Athens, our detailed curricula and our extensive experience will allow us to develop and deliver IPL activities, in line with those in Cyprus by design. Moreover, the operation of the other Schools at UNIC Athens creates rich opportunities for collaborative research, such as, for example, with the School of Life and Health Sciences and the Pharmacy programme, and will actively promote such collaborations from the outset.

Lastly, recognising the unique capabilities and position of HHG, alongside UNIC, we would encourage HEAL and the partnership to continue to proactively and strategically engage with the government and thought leaders to develop junior medical training opportunities (residency programme) within the private healthcare system, for the benefit of healthcare in Greece.

We thank the EEC for their recommendation in relation to residency programmes. The hospitals of the Hellenic Healthcare Group (HHG) provide rich clinical training opportunities which would also be of benefit to residents, and the Group is also active in continuous professional development via



HEAL (Healthcare Education & Advanced Learning Academy), which is the educational/ CPD arm of HHG. We will explore with our HHG partners the relevant opportunities in the context of the overall evolution of specialty training in Greece.

Thank you again to the EEC for their constructive evaluation. We look forward to welcoming them back to Athens in the near future.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Prof Aleksandar Jovanovic	Head of Department	
Prof Photos Hajigeorgiou	Associate Head of Department	
Prof Joseph Joseph	Associate Dean for Academic Affairs	
Dr Chloe Antoniou	GEMD Programme Co-Director	
Prof Louis Loizou	GEMD Programme Co-Director	
Dr Persoulla Nicolaou	MD Programme Director	
Dr Nicoletta Nicolaou	PhD Programme Director	
Dr Danny Alon Ellenbogen	MD Programme Associate Director	
Prof Paola Nicolaides	MBBS Programme Director	

Date: 04 July 2025

