

Doc. 300.3.1

Date: 21/12/2020

External Evaluation Report (Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:** Cyprus University of Technology
- **Town:** Limassol
- **Faculty:** Faculty of Geotechnical Sciences & Environmental Management
- **Department:** Dept. Agricultural Sciences, Biotechnology & Food Science
- **Program(s) of study under evaluation:**

Program 1 (BSc, 4 years, 251 ECTS)

In Greek:

Πτυχίο Γεωπονικών Επιστημών, Βιοτεχνολογίας και Επιστήμης Τροφίμων

In English:

BSc in Agricultural Sciences, Biotechnology & Food Science

Program 2 (MSc, 3 semesters, 107 ECTS)

In Greek:

Μάστερ στη Γεωπονική Βιοτεχνολογία

In English:

MSc in Agricultural Biotechnology

Program 3 (PhD, 3 years, 182 ECTS)

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό στις Γεωπονικές Επιστήμες, Βιοτεχνολογία και Επιστήμη Τροφίμων

In English:

PhD in Agricultural Sciences, Biotechnology & Food Science

- **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. Introduction

The onsite visit of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) has been conducted in the format of several remote video conference meetings being organized by CYQAA on November 24-25, 2020. The EEC had video conference meetings with the Rector of the Institute, the Dean of the Faculty, coordinators of the BSc, MSc, and PhD programs, the teaching personnel, students graduated from the BSc, MSc, and PhD programs, as well as supporting personnel. The discussions and Q&A-sessions were based on detailed documents (among others Self Evaluation Reports with supporting annexes by the institution), which were distributed in advance among the members of the EEC. In addition to the printed materials provided, representatives (management, senior scientists, PhD students, post-docs, supporting staff) gave informative PowerPoint presentations and there have been video clips about the teaching and research facilities with English subtitles made available and displayable to the members of the EEC. The video conference meetings provided important information and insights not available in other materials. The committee took into account international trends and developments in science, society and higher education as it formed its judgement. In addition, the committee bore in mind the local rules and regulations as outlined in the documents and communicated during the online site visit.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Prof. Dr. Reiner Doluschitz	University Professor Farm Management; Director of the Institute, Food Security Center, and Research unit of Co-operative Studies	University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, Germany
Prof. Dr. Corné Pieterse	Professor Plant-Microbe Interactions and Scientific Director of the Institute of Environmental Biology	Utrecht University, the Netherlands
Prof. Dr. Pirjo Mäkelä	Professor of Crop Science	University of Helsinki, Finland
Georgios Spyrou	President	Registry Council of Agricultural Scientists (Συμβούλιο Γεωπόνων), Cyprus
George Retsides	Student Environmental and Food Chemistry	University of Cyprus

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

- 1.1 Mission and strategic planning
- 1.2 Connecting with society
- 1.3 Development processes

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: *Non-compliant*
3: *Partially compliant*
4 or 5: *Compliant*

Quality indicators/criteria		
1. Department's academic profile and orientation		
1.1 Mission and strategic planning		1 - 5
1.1.1	The Department has formally adopted a mission statement, which is available to the public and easily accessible.	4
1.1.2	The Department has developed its strategic planning aiming at fulfilling its mission.	4
1.1.3	The Department's strategic planning includes short, medium-term and long-term goals and objectives, which are periodically revised and adapted.	3
1.1.4	The programs of study offered by the Department reflect its academic profile and are aligned with the European and international practice.	5
1.1.5	The academic community is involved in shaping and monitoring the implementation of the Department's development strategies.	4
1.1.6	Stakeholders such as academics, students, graduates and other professional and scientific associations participate in the Department's development strategy.	4
1.1.7	The mechanism for collecting and analysing data and indicators needed to effectively design the Department's academic development is adequate and effective.	3

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to most of the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above. Indicators/criteria 1.1.3 and 1.1.7 are scored as partly compliant (3). The lower scores of indicators/criteria 1.1.3 and 1.1.7 are based on the observation that overarching concepts at the University level are hardly visible and/or are not efficiently operated. This holds true for comparative analyses at a certain point in time as well as even more concerning dynamic analyses over time. As a consequence it is difficult to indicate and

measure the development and progress of certain numbers and scores. This is particularly true with respect to measuring the (long-term) impact of certain policies and measures taken. It therefore is recommended by the EEC to develop a set of University wide overarching Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which compulsory should be applied by all Departments of the CUT. This would allow horizontal comparative analyses in- and even outside the Institutions as well as vertical comparative analyses over time (progress reports).

Additionally, provide information on the following:

1. Coherence and compatibility among programs of study offered by the Department.
2. Coherence and compatibility among Departments within the School/Faculty (to which the Department under evaluation belongs).

The Department of Agricultural Sciences, Biotechnology & Food Science organizes a high-level, well-balanced, state-of-the-art curriculum at the BSc, MSc, and PhD level in Agricultural Sciences, Biotechnology and Food Science. As the only broad university-level curriculum on Agricultural Sciences and Agri-Food in Cyprus, it serves an important national purpose. Students are scientifically trained to solve problems in the agricultural sector in line with modern research achievements. The students are trained with respect to the environment and principles of sustainability in the frame of a knowledge-based bio-economy to ensure the production and processing of high-quality, safe and added value products and the provision of high-quality agricultural services. At the MSc and PhD level, graduates are prepared and trained to continue their scientific training in post graduate programs in Cyprus and abroad.

Provide suggestions for changes in case of incompatibility.

It was the impression of the EEC that the study programs of the Department function as a unity, but relatively isolated from other study programs at the Faculty and University. The study programs of the Department would benefit if it would be more interconnected with other study programs at the Faculty.

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

1.2 Connecting with society

1 - 5

1.2.1	The Department has effective mechanisms to assess the needs and demands of society and takes them into account in its various activities.	4
1.2.2	The Department provides sufficient information to the public about its activities and offered programs of study.	4
1.2.3	The Department ensures that its operation and activities have a positive impact on society.	4
1.2.4	The Department has an effective communication mechanism with its graduates.	4

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above. The Department has a good connection with society. Their study programs serve as accreditation for the Registry Council of agricultural companies, which represents the stakeholders in the field of Agri-Food in Cyprus. Many graduates find employment in their field of study and stakeholder representatives are involved in the development of the curriculum.

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

1.3 Development processes

1 - 5

1.3.1	Effective procedures and measures are in place to attract and select teaching staff to ensure that they possess the formal and substantive skills to teach, carry out research and effectively carry out their work.	3
1.3.2	Planning teaching staff recruitment and their professional development is in line with the Department's academic development plan.	4
1.3.3	The Department applies an effective strategy of attracting high-level students from Cyprus and abroad.	4
1.3.4	The funding processes for the operation of the Department and the continuous improvement of the quality of its programs of study are adequate and transparent.	4

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to most of the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above. Indicator/ criterium 1.3.1 is scored as partly compliant (3). The department has an excellent teaching staff with a solid background in research. Higher education teaching is continuously under development. Teaching personnel could be offered the possibility to continuously improve their skills and knowledge in higher education by exposing them to innovative teaching methods and skills. A central university system for obtaining higher education teaching qualifications is recommended. This would both further lift teaching skills of academic teachers and could provide a system acknowledging the equal value of teaching over research. It had been mentioned during the onsite visit that the teaching staff is not regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development, there is no such professional and teaching skills training by special experts at CUT. It has been reported by the EEC that in other countries such trainings are offered at a federal or even national level to ensure that potentials of such experienced trainers become fully absorbed. There is no specific reporting that Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility. The EEC assumes that there is consideration of such information. However, since there is no permanent ongoing training available for teaching staff it has to be doubted that the development of their teaching skills and their mobility can be measured and considered. However, a commitment to Academic Personnel Advancement can be found in Annex III c of the SER. This should be used in order to observe and measure the development and progress.

Additionally, write:

- Expected number of Cypriot and international students
BSc: ~40/year (total ~150); MSc: ~25/year (total ~38); PhD: ~8/year (total ~25)
- Countries of origin of international students and number from each country
Cyprus (~95%); Greece (~4%); Albania (<1%).

Findings

The profile of the, relatively young, highly motivated teaching staff is broad and excellently suited to carry out the study programs. Since Digital Agriculture is one of the major strategic focal points of future research (and teaching), expertise in this area is still largely missing. The same holds true for Agricultural Economics, Management, and Agricultural Engineering.

Agricultural research farms have been established recently, which will be highly instrumental for the research base teaching approach in the study programs and for translational research carried out in the Department.

The teaching staff is unnecessarily heavily occupied with many administrative and technical support activities which largely distracts them from their core business: high-level teaching, research, and research fund acquisition. The EEC noticed that many administrative activities related to teaching, but also to lab management and ordering of consumables for research through a highly bureaucratic system which consumes a lot of the time of the teaching staff. These are activities that should be handled by an administrative clerk dedicated to the department.

Strengths

The Department harbors 16 well-educated teaching staff with a good research background.

The Department acquired research funds from EU, and partly also from non-EU (private) sources.

The Moodle platform at the University level is functioning well.

The Department recently acquired two experimental research farms, which will be highly instrumental in future research and teaching programs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A Key Performance Indicator (KPI) – System at University level is not visible.

Shortcomings in the fields of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Engineering (Mechanization) as well as Bioinformatics staff could be included in the Academic staff body (could eventually and temporarily covered by invited lecturers from Greece).

Permanent technical staff is missing for operating the Research farms and laboratories with high-end equipment.

More technical support staff could / should be linked to academic staff in order to efficiently run and manage the facilities.

Administrative support should be linked to the Department to carry out administrative duties related to teaching administration, lab management, and ordering of consumables for research.

More detailed feedback from the EEC on the indicators/criteria is provided in Doc. 300.3.1/1: the External Evaluation Report (Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation).

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8)

Sub-areas

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

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: *Non-compliant*
3: *Partially compliant*
4 or 5: *Compliant*

Quality indicators/criteria		
2. Quality Assurance		
2.1 System and quality assurance strategy		1 - 5
2.1.1	The Department has a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of the Institution's strategic management.	5
2.1.2	Internal stakeholders develop and implement a policy for quality assurance through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.	4
2.1.3	The Department's policy for quality assurance supports guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against students or staff.	5
2.1.4	The quality assurance system adequately covers all the functions and sectors of the Department's activities:	
2.1.4.1	Teaching and learning	5
2.1.4.2	Research	3
2.1.4.3	The connection with society	3
2.1.4.4	Management and support services	3
2.1.5	The quality assurance system promotes a culture of quality.	4

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to most of the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above. Indicators/criteria 2.1.4.2, 2.1.4.3, and 2.1.4.4 are scored as partly compliant (3).

Although the Department's research and the quality of the research/teaching staff is at a good level, it did not become clear to what extent this is systematically monitored and which performance indicators/ criteria

are used in the quality assurance system. The same holds true for the connection with society. The Department takes action in order to obtain input for its research and study programs from stakeholders in society, but also here it did not become clear to what extent this is systematically monitored and which performance indicators/criteria are used in the quality assurance system.

The quality assurance system to safeguard sufficient support to management and other (technical) support services is only partly successful. While library services and IT support are well in order, ineffective administrative support to the management and teaching staff of the Department impacts proper functioning of the teaching and research activities of the Department's staff. At the university level, a system should be in place to safeguard sufficient administrative support.

The same holds true for technical support staff. A department with a heavy research and teaching duty, should have sufficient technical support staff for maintenance of its facilities, technical support for the high-end research equipment, and support staff safeguarding of the safety at the work floor. This cannot be requested from the teaching staff and the PhD students.

2. Quality Assurance

2.2 Quality assurance for the programs of study		1 - 5
2.2.1	The responsibility for decision-making and monitoring the implementation of the programs of study offered by the Department lies with the teaching staff.	5
2.2.2	The system and criteria for assessing students' performance in the subjects of the programs of studies offered by the Department are clear, sufficient and known to the students.	5
2.2.3	The quality control system refers to specific indicators and is effective.	4
2.2.4	The results from student assessments are used to improve the programs of study.	4
2.2.5	The policy dealing with plagiarism committed by students as well as mechanisms for identifying and preventing it are effective.	4
2.2.6	The established procedures for examining students' objections/ disagreements on issues of student evaluation or academic ethics are effective.	5
2.2.7	The Department publishes information related to the programs of study, credit units, learning outcomes, methodology, student admission criteria, completion of studies, facilities, number of teaching staff and the expertise of teaching staff.	5
2.2.8	The Department has a clear and consistent policy on the admission criteria for students in the various programs of studies offered.	5
2.2.9	The Department flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods.	4
2.2.10	The Department systematically collects data in relation to the academic performance of students, implements procedures for evaluating such data and has a relevant policy in place.	4
2.2.11	The Department analyses and publishes graduate employment information.	4

2.2.12	The Department ensures adequate and appropriate learning resources in line with European and international standards and/or international practices, particularly:		
	2.2.12.1	Building facilities	4
	2.2.12.2	Library	5
	2.2.12.3	Rooms for theoretical, practical and laboratory lessons	4
	2.2.12.4	Technological infrastructure	5
	2.2.12.5	Academic support	5
2.2.13	There is a student welfare service that supports students in regard to academic, personal problems and difficulties.		4
2.2.14	The Department's mechanisms, processes and infrastructure consider the needs of a diverse student population such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities.		4
2.2.15	Mentoring of each student is provided and the number of students per each permanent teaching member is adequate.		5
2.2.16	The provision of quality doctoral studies is ensured through doctoral studies regulations, which are publicly available.		5
2.2.17	The number of doctoral students, under the supervision of a member of the teaching staff, enables continuous and effective feedback to the students and it complies with the European and international standards.		5
2.2.18	The Department has mechanisms and funds to support writing and attending conferences of doctoral candidates.		4
2.2.19	There is a clear policy on authorship and intellectual property.		3

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to most of the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above. Indicator/criterion 2.2.19 is scored as partly compliant (3). The EEC couldn't find information on policy on authorship and intellectual property rights.

Findings

The Department follows the CUT Quality Assurance Policy, which is dedicated to excellence in order to be established in the international academic and scientific environment as a pioneering center of excellence in research and teaching, continuously contributing to social progress and culture. Very good quality assurance policies are in place for teaching and learning, and the study programs, while quality assurance policies for research, connection with society and management, administrative, and technical support services are less clear.

The Department provides high-quality learning and research resources at a high international standard. The recent acquisition of experimental farms will be very important for future quality of both teaching and research. The library functions at an excellent level. The rooms for theoretical and practical lab sessions are of high quality, but shared with researchers. This is economically efficient, but care should be taken that this does not become a limitation for the student capacity in the future. Academic support of the researchers and students is at an excellent level, but administrative and technical support needs to be improved to the benefit of the teaching and research quality.

Strengths

Good quality assurance policies in place for the study program related activities of the department. Highly educated teaching staff, in relatively early phase of career, highly motivated to run high-quality teaching and research program.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Both the Department's research and study programs could benefit from a more structured interaction with stakeholders from society. The Department could think of a bi-annual university-meets-industry meeting to showcase its research and study programs and collect feedback and suggestions on a more regular basis.

To safeguard quality of the teaching and learning process in the study programs the administrative support needs should be better monitored by the university and a system should be in place to maximize the time that the teaching staff can devote to their core business: teaching and research.

To safeguard the quality of an efficient, effective, and safe research and teaching environment, it will be important that the university monitors whether technical support is adequate for maintenance, management, and daily running of research facilities and high-end equipment, controlling safety in the lab, and technical support of students and teachers.

More detailed feedback from the EEC on the indicators/criteria is provided in Doc. 300.3.1/1: the External Evaluation Report (Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation).

Please ✓ what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

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

3. Administration (ESG 1.1, 1.3, 1.6)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: *Non-compliant*; 3: *Partially compliant*; 4 or 5: *Compliant*

Quality indicators/criteria		
3. Administration		1 - 5
3.1	The administrative structure is in line with legislation and the Department's mission.	4
3.2	The members of the teaching and administrative staff and the students participate, at a satisfactory degree and on the basis of specified procedures, in the management of the Department.	4
3.3	The administrative staff adequately supports the operation of the Department.	2
3.4	Adequate allocation of competences and responsibilities is ensured so that in academic matters, decisions are made by academics and the Department's council competently exercises legal control over such decisions.	5
3.5	The Department applies effective procedures to ensure transparency in the decision-making process.	5
3.6	Statutory sessions of the Department are held and minutes are kept.	4
3.7	The Department's council operates systematically and autonomously and exercise full powers provided for by the law and / or the constitution of the Department without the intervention or involvement of a body or person outside the law provisions.	5
3.8	The manner in which the Department's council operates and the procedures for disseminating and implementing their decisions are clearly formulated and implemented precisely and effectively.	5
3.9	The Department applies procedures for the prevention and disciplinary control of academic misconduct of students, teaching and administrative staff, including plagiarism.	4
3.10	The Department has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.	4

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to most of the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above. Indicator/ criterium 3.2 is scored as partly compliant (3), and indicator/criterium 3.3 is scored as non-compliant (2). The members of the teaching staff and the students participate, at a satisfactory degree and on the basis of specified procedures, in the management of the Department. Students are involved in decisions making processes or are consulted in diverse Departmental processes. However, administrative support is located at a distance from the Department and is not sufficiently directed towards alleviating the administrative work load of the teaching staff.

Findings

The quality of the Department's administration in terms of structure, decision making, and quality control is in order. However, the administrative workload is too much on the shoulders of the teaching staff. Administrative support should be focused on alleviating administrative workload of the teaching staff.

Strengths

Administrative structures and procedures are well in order, resulting in a well-organized Department in terms of study programs and research. The highly qualified, motivated, relatively young teaching staff is supported by highly qualified, more senior staff in management roles.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC advises to appoint administrative clerk support within the Department. In this way, the administrative support has short lines with the teaching staff and can be better positioned and directed to perform administrative duties that alleviate the work load of the teaching staff and the Department's management.

More detailed feedback from the EEC on the indicators/criteria is provided in Doc. 300.3.1/1: the External Evaluation Report (Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation).

Please select what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
3. Administration	Partially Compliant

4. Learning and Teaching

(ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programs of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: *Non-compliant*

3: *Partially compliant*

4 or 5: *Compliant*

Quality indicators/criteria		
4. Learning and Teaching		
4.1 Planning the programs of study		1 - 5
4.1.1	The Department provides an effective system for designing, approving, monitoring and periodically reviewing the programs of study.	4
4.1.2	Students and other stakeholders, including employers, are actively involved on the programs' review and development.	4
4.1.3	The content of the programs of study, the assignments and the final exams correspond to the appropriate level as indicated by the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).	5
4.1.4	The programs of study are in compliance with the existing legislation and meet the professional qualifications requirements in the professional courses, where applicable.	5
4.1.5	The Department ensures that its programs of study integrate effectively theory and practice.	5

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above.

4. Learning and Teaching

4.2 Organisation of teaching

1 - 5

4.2.1	The Department establishes student admission criteria for each program, which are adhered to consistently.	4
4.2.2	Recognition of prior studies and credit transfer is regulated by procedures and regulations that are in line with European standards and/or international practices.	5
4.2.3	The number of students in the teaching rooms is suitable for theoretical, practical and laboratory lessons.	5
4.2.4	The teaching staff of the Department has regular and effective communication with their students, promoting mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship.	5
4.2.5	Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process.	4
4.2.6	The teaching staff of the Department provides timely and effective feedback to their students.	4
4.2.7	The criteria and the method of assessment as well as the criteria for marking are published in advance.	5
4.2.8	The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.	5

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above.

Findings

Monitoring and revising program of study follows the established University Rules also involving the stakeholders and students. The content of programs of study as well as assignments and exams correspond to the EQF. The programs of study integrate effectively theory and practice due to number of practicals in teaching laboratories as well as low student/teacher –ratio in general. There seems to be a need for English language teaching, especially at MSc and PhD programs of study.

The student admission criteria and credit transfer follow the University Rules and are in line with international practice. The number of students in the teaching rooms is suitable for lessons. The communication between students and teachers is effective and learning and teaching as well as feedback is to large extent based on communication between them. Criteria and assessment methods are published in advance and demonstrate the learning outcomes.

Strengths

The students are actively involved in development of the program of study. This has been a strength, especially since the programs are quite new. The created programs of study have a strong integration of theory and practice, which will improve the students' ability to step into business. The continuous assessment practice allows students to evaluate their learning outcome achievements.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Improvement could perhaps be achieved if decreasing the bureaucratic steps of designing and revision of programs of study were considered. Perhaps also direct evaluation of program of study by students could be considered, for example at or sometime after graduation.

It could be considered to make the criteria and especially scoring for doctoral student admission more transparent.

We recommend to offer the MSc and PhD programs in English language.

More detailed feedback from the EEC on the indicators/criteria is provided in Doc. 300.3.1/1: the External Evaluation Report (Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation).

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
4.1 Planning the programs of study	Compliant
4.2 Organisation of teaching	Compliant

5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: *Non-compliant*
3: *Partially compliant*
4 or 5: *Compliant*

Quality indicators/criteria		
5. Teaching Staff		1 - 5
5.1	The number of teaching staff - full-time and exclusive work - and the subject area of the staff sufficiently support the programs of study.	4
5.2	The teaching staff of the Department has the relevant formal and substantive qualifications for teaching the individual subjects as described in the relevant legislation.	5
5.3	The visiting Professors' subject areas adequately support the Department's programs of study.	N/A
5.4	The special teaching staff and special scientists have the required qualifications, sufficient professional experience and expertise to teach a limited number of programs of study.	5
5.5	The ratio of special teaching staff to the total number of teaching staff is satisfactory.	5
5.6	The ratio of the number of subjects of the program of study taught by teaching staff working fulltime and exclusively to the number of subjects taught by part-time teaching staff ensures the quality of the program of study.	4
5.7	The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff is sufficient to support and ensure the quality of the program of study.	5
5.8	Feedback processes for teaching staff in regard to the evaluation of their teaching work, by the students, are satisfactory.	4

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above.

Also, write the following:

- Number of teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work: 12
- Number of special teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work: 3
- Number of visiting Professors
- Number of special scientists on lease services: 15

Findings

Teaching staff and special teaching staff are highly qualified and experienced teachers. They are also highly productive both in teaching and research. All representatives of the permanent staff have PhD and nearly all special teaching staff. The ratio of courses taught by permanent vs non-permanent staff fulfills nearly the 70-30% rule. The student/teacher ratio is low enough to ensure high quality teaching and learning in the programs of study. The programs of study include animal, food, and plant sciences, and some disciplines seem to be better covered among the teaching staff than others. The University has a common system to collect student feedback regarding teaching. On the top of that, there are informal student-teacher discussions in which feedback is given directly.

Strengths

The teaching personnel is not only highly qualified but also highly motivated. They have excellent publication records and they have excellent success in attracting especially international research funding. The student/teacher ratio allows an environment of high-quality teaching and learning. The informal student-teacher discussions are used in practice to adjust the teaching.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

It is recommended to re-evaluate whether the teaching load of the permanent staff could be adjusted as it is rather high, and for example take into account supervision and other ways of teaching instead of only lecturing as teaching.

Some disciplines, e.g. animal science, which have very few representatives among teaching staff, could be strengthened. Furthermore, there is need for assistance in laboratory practicals, which could be fulfilled with skilled technical staff. That would also improve the working safety.

More detailed feedback from the EEC on the indicators/criteria is provided in Doc. 300.3.1/1: the External Evaluation Report (Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation).

Please ✓ what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
5. Teaching Staff	Compliant

6. Research

(ESG 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: *Non-compliant*
3: *Partially compliant*
4 or 5: *Compliant*

Quality indicators/criteria		
6. Research		1 - 5
6.1	The Department has a research policy formulated in line with its mission.	4
6.2	The Department consistently applies internal regulations and procedures of research activity, which promote the set out research policy and ensure compliance with the regulations of research projects financing programs.	4
6.3	The Department provides adequate facilities and equipment to cover the staff and students' research activities.	4
6.4	The Department has the appropriate mechanisms for the development of students' research skills.	4
6.5	The results of the teaching staff research activity are published to a satisfactory extent in international journals which work with critics, international conferences, conference proceedings, publications, etc. The Department also uses an open access policy for publications, which is consistent with the corresponding national and European policy.	4
6.6	The Department ensures that research results are integrated into teaching and, to the extent applicable, promotes and implements a policy of transferring know-how to society and the production sector.	5
6.7	The Department provides mechanisms which ensure compliance with international rules of research ethics, both in relation to research activity and the rights of researchers.	4
6.8	The external, non-governmental, funding of research activities of teaching staff is similar to other Departments in Cyprus and abroad.	4
6.9	The policy, indirect or direct of internal funding of the research activities of the teaching staff is satisfactory, based on European and international practices.	4

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above. The corresponding policy is described in the "Regulations and procedures of research work CUT Research Activity Policy (Annex 5.2 CUT Research Activities- 319-324).

Findings

It is mentioned in the SER that research in the field of interest is done and appreciated by the Faculty staff. Different financial funds are used for financing of such research: EU-sources, CUT-sources, and sources from private companies from the Agricultural and Agribusiness sectors. The amounts of research funding is included in the individual CV of the Faculty staff members. It has been mentioned during the remote on-site-visit that applied research in collaboration with private companies and even with student involvement is conducted on a regular basis (this has been confirmed by the students/graduates in the respective discussion).

There is collaborative research and implementation of research results also to teaching. This has been confirmed by teaching staff and graduates/students as well. Besides sufficient laboratory capacities also the Experimental research farms have the potential to contributing and to foster research activities. However, the international network for collaborative research could/should be strengthened and expanded.

Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programs courses and can be regarded as indicators for research activities in the field of interest. There is a comprehensive listing of all publications by academic staff of the Department under evaluation in Annex 3a_Full CVs_academic staff_ABF.

Strengths

Resources for executing up to date research in the field of interest are available and currently sufficient. Besides laboratory space also Experiment farms are part of such resources. However, resources and financial funds for research could/should be expanded, particularly in making use of the International partner network which is linked to the Department and its staff members. Very good English language proficiency among members of all status groups would be supportive in this respect. An expansion of the network and intensification of collaboration would also allow to apply for financial research sources from International donor organizations (Non-EU).

Areas of improvement and recommendations

As mentioned above the International research partner network could/should be further developed and expanded. However, additional resources, particularly financial resources, would be required in doing as such. Very good English language proficiency among members of all status groups would be supportive in this respect and should be used to foster more and intensified research. Research funds should be expanded to other International (Non-EU) donor organizations. Permanent technical staff for caretaking in Experimental farms and additional academic staff (e.g. Bioinformatics, Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Engineering, Digital Agriculture) would be requested to also cover highly complex but up to date research topics (e.g. such as Climate Change impacts, Improved resource use efficiency, Digitalization, Structural change etc.).

More detailed feedback from the EEC on the indicators/criteria is provided in Doc. 300.3.1/1: the External Evaluation Report (Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation).

Please ✓ what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
6. Research	Compliant

7. Resources (ESG 1.6)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: *Non-compliant*
3: *Partially compliant*
4 or 5: *Compliant*

Quality indicators/criteria		
7. Resources		1 - 5
7.1	The Department has sufficient financial resources to support its functions, managed by the Institutional and Departmental bodies.	4
7.2	The Department follows sound and efficient management of the available financial resources in order to develop academically and research wise.	5
7.3	The Department's profits and donations are used for its development and for the benefit of the university community.	4
7.4	The Department's budget is appropriate for its mission and adequate for the implementation of strategic planning.	4
7.5	The Department carries out an assessment of the risks and sustainability of the programs of study and adequately provides feedback on their operation.	5
7.6	The Department's external audit and the transparent management of its finances are ensured.	5
7.7	The fitness-for-purpose of support facilities and services is periodically reviewed.	5
Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.		
Based on the self-evaluation and accompanying documents and the onsite visit the EEC concludes that the Department is compliant to the quality indicators/criteria mentioned above.		

Findings

There are nearly adequate financial resources for consumables and equipment in the laboratories, although the budget cuts have limited purchases slightly. The management is effective and transparent, and financial resources are used effectively, with the aim to ensure and maintain a high level of teaching and research. The budget management follows strictly the regulations and is under the University Council.

The budget is limited as it comes to maintenance and strategic planning, for example maintenance of equipment, and management of the Experimental Farms and Greenhouse facilities. The programs of study are carefully assessed periodically and feedback is collected from students and stakeholders. Support facilities and services fitness for their purpose is evaluated periodically.

Strengths

The financial management of the department has been successful despite budget cuts. The department has taken a strategic view, due to limitations regarding field work until now, to equip the laboratories according to the requirements of biotechnological research in the field of agriculture, which has proven to be a successful choice. The strategy is to invest in future to the farms and greenhouse facilities.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Laboratories are well equipped, but there is lack of skilled technicians to operate the equipment and assist researchers and students for example in troubleshooting. There are now experimental farms and greenhouse facilities, which can be utilized both in teaching and in research, however, there exists no operational management for those facilities. Moreover, development of those facilities requires further financial input, which could be considered. Thus, extra funding should be allocated in the budget to cover the consumables for teaching purposes, maintenance of equipment, employment of laboratory technicians as well as farm and greenhouse management.

Even though, the support services are reviewed periodically, there seems to be a gap between the secretarial needs and demands. Thus, it is suggested that secretarial services are adjusted according to the raising needs.

More detailed feedback from the EEC on the indicators/criteria is provided in Doc. 300.3.1/1: the External Evaluation Report (Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation).

Please ✓ what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
7. Resources	Compliant

C. Conclusions and final remarks

Summarizing the above indicated evaluation results on a single standard basis it can be stated that the Department under review should be accredited without major doubts.

The Department of Agricultural Sciences, Biotechnology & Food Science is responsible for a high-level, well-balanced, state-of-the-art curriculum in Agricultural Sciences, Biotechnology and Food Science. The department serves an important national purpose as it organizes the only broad university-level curriculum on Agricultural Sciences and Agri-Food in Cyprus. The Department's academic profile is of high standard and can match with comparable universities internationally. The Department performs well on the indicators for Quality Assurance, Administration, Resources, and Learning and Teaching. The Department has an excellent teaching staff who are highly devoted to the study programs. The Department's research profile is of a good standard and links her research activities to the study programs.

However, there is potential for improvement. The most important recommendations are mentioned below (and are in line with the recommendations outlined in Doc. 300.3.1/1 (External Evaluation Report – Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation) :

1. A comprehensive and uniform Key Performance Indicator-system could be established at the University level.
2. Concerning the research programs and the related teaching contents of the study programs, there could be a stronger emphasis on Bioinformatics, Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Engineering, and Digital Agriculture.
3. Teaching personnel could be offered the possibility to improve their skills and knowledge in higher education. A central university system for obtaining higher education teaching qualifications is recommended. This would both lift teaching skills of academic teachers and could provide a system acknowledging the equal value of teaching over research.
4. The Department could encourage students to take more responsibility in their learning and teaching starting from BSc level up to PhD level. This could include student tutors, student peers, and learning activities organized by students. This could help to alleviate the teaching demand for the teaching staff.
5. Consider offering activities and teaching contents in the English language, particularly at the MSc and PhD level. This would provide potential to attract a larger share of students from international origin.
6. The administrative workload of the academic teaching staff should be relieved. Many administrative activities could be allocated to designated administrative support staff, which should be housed in the physical vicinity of the teaching staff for efficient and effective interactions. More time for teaching and research would immediately have a positive impact on these core businesses of the university.
7. Revisit the complexity of the rather bureaucratic procedures within the university to reach a better balance between quality assurance and workload.
8. Considering that maintaining the high-quality study programs of the Department relies on the motivation and dedication of the academic teaching staff, the EEC recommends to appoint more permanent staff at the Department, academic staff and, importantly, technical staff to support the high level scientific infrastructure (e.g. equipment and experimental university farms). This would also increase safety at the work floor.

D. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. dr. Reiner Doluschitz	
Prof. dr. Corné Pieterse	
Prof. dr. Pirjo Mäkelä	
Georgios Spyrou	
George Retsides	

Date: 21 December 2020