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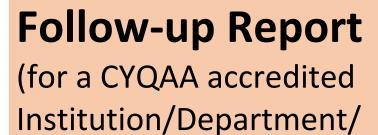
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Doc. 300.1.4

Date: Date.

Follow-up Report
(for a CYQAA accredited Institution/Department/ Programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: The Cyprus Institute**

- **Town: Nicosia**

- **Type of Evaluation: <u>Programmatic</u>**

- **Accredited on CYQAA Council's Summit Number: 107**

- **Date of Accreditation: 20/05/2024**

<u>**If applicable**</u>:

- **School/Faculty: The CyI Graduate School**

- **Department:** Department/Sector

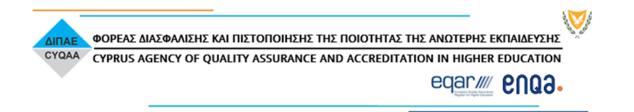- **Programme of Study Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

  Programme: <u>Master</u>
  In Greek:
  Υπολογισμοί Υψηλών Επιδόσεων και Μηχανική Μάθηση [1 ακαδημαϊκό έτος, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ (MSc) - 1.5 ακαδημαϊκό έτος, 120 ECTS, Μάστερ (MPhil)]
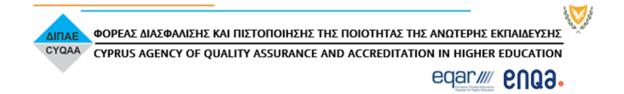 **In English:**
    High Performance Computing and Machine Learning [1 academic year, 90 ECTS, Master (MSc) - 1.5 academic years, 120 ECTS, Master (MPhil)]
- **Programme's type: <u>Conventional</u>**
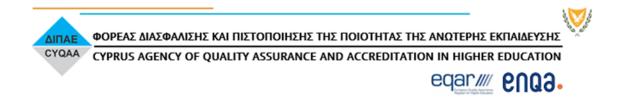
- **Language (s) of instruction: <u>English</u>**

A.   Internal Quality Assurance Committee

Name	Position	Rank
Dr Nikolas Bakirtzis	Associate Professor	The Cyprus Institute
Dr Franco Marenco	Associate Professor	The Cyprus Institute
Dr Theodoros Christoudias	Associate Professor	The Cyprus Institute
Dr Kirsi Lorentz	Associate Professor	The Cyprus Institute
Dr Chrysanthia Leontiou	Head of the Office of Graduate Studies	The Cyprus Institute
Elias Kousoulos	Student Representative	The Cyprus Institute

B.   Guidelines on content and structure of the Follow-up Report

- *CYQAA has a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution toward the improvement and further development of the CYQAA externally evaluated and accredited institution / department / programme of study. The present Follow-up Report should recount, synoptically, institutional action taken toward the implementation of the remarks indicated in the CYQAA Final Report.*

- *The Follow-up report should provide evidence (via website links) and appendices at the end of the report on how the remarks of the Council of CYQAA have been adhered to.*

- *The remarks indicated in the CYQAA Final Report should be copied from the corresponding report and be followed by the institution's response.*

- *The institution may add any other institutional action taken towards the implementation of ESG aiming at the improvement of the institution / department / programme of study.*

1. Remarks on the CYQAA Final Report

CYQAA Council's Decision

The Council of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education, during its 107th Summit on 20-05-2024, according to the Article (20)(2)(f)(i) of the "Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws" of 2015 to 2021 [L.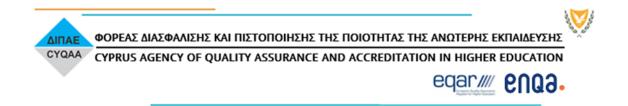 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021], and on the basis of the suggestions of the External Evaluation Committee and the comments of the institution on the External Evaluation Committee report, **decided that the programme is accredited to be delivered in English.**

The institution should provide evidence to the Agency for the following by the beginning of the new academic year, 2024-2025:

1. Administrative staff should be represented more strongly in the committees that report directly to the Provost or Associate Provost. This representation should be through self-election from the administrative staff, rather than by appointment according to their specific position in the administration.
2. The following information shall be specified in the QA policy of the institute:
- The length of term for each member in each committee
- The frequency of meetings for each committee
- Information on the minimum number of members who must be present for the committee meeting to take place

3. The presence of the student representative in committees should be compulsory.
4. The institute's QA policy should be amended to specify precisely the composition, duration of term, and frequency of meetings of the School Council.
5. Include stronger representation of the administrative staff in the Graduate School committees.
6. Further strengthen the involvement of students in program design and revision

7. Introduce formal pedagogical and didactic training and development for all teaching staff.

8. Address the gender imbalance in the student population.

9. Increase the number of international students by developing and adopting a marketing strategy.

10. Encourage students to explore the many future options unlocked through this program.

2. Institution's Response

1. *Administrative staff should be represented more strongly in the committees that report directly to the Provost or Associate Provost. This representation should be through self-election from the administrative staff, rather than by appointment according to their specific position in the administration.*

   CyI Response:

   The representation of administrative staff within the Graduate School committees has been enhanced, with a particular emphasis on including members from the Office of Graduate Studies. This strategic inclusion is predicated on the specific mandates of these committees and the required educational expertise necessary for members to effectively contribute to their obligations.

   Additionally, several pivotal positions of administrative staff have been incorporated into specific committees to ensure a robust and knowledgeable framework.

   Notable roles included are:

   Head of Human Resources: This individual brings expertise in personnel management, organizational behavior, and compliance with the organization's regulations.

   Head of Accounts: With a focus on financial oversight and resource allocation, this role is critical in discussions regarding budgetary considerations, fees management and funding for graduate programs.

   Vice President of Operations: This position encompasses a broad understanding of institutional operations, strategic planning, and implementation of policies that directly affect the educational environment.
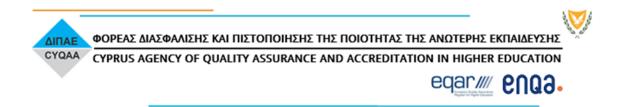
2. *The following information shall be specified in the QA policy of the institute:*
   - *The length of term for each member in every committee*
   - *The frequency of meetings for each committee*
   - *Information on the minimum number of members who must be present for the committee meeting to take place*

   Response: All the above points are addressed in the Graduate School's Educational Quality Management System (EQMS) available on the CyI website and also sent to all students:

   https://www.cyi.ac.cy/index.php/education/overview/quality-assurance.html

3. *"The presence of the student representative in committees should be compulsory."*

   Response: The Student Representative's participation in Committees in which his/her role is required remains compulsory. This obligation underscores the importance of student voice and representation in the decision-making processes that affect their educational experience and institutional governance. To further strengthen this framework of representation, recent student representatives' elections have introduced an additional layer of support for the Student Representative role, by electing a Deputy Student Representative, enhancing hence, the capacity for student advocacy and engagement in the committees.

4. "The institute's QA policy should be amended to specify precisely the composition, duration of term, and frequency of meetings of the School Council."

Response: The School Council is the same body as the Academic Committee. This is due to the high level of similarity between the mandate of the Academic Committee of the organization and the designated duties of the School Council as these are articulated in the relevant legislation.

Composition of the Committee:

1. Provost (Chair)
2. Coordinators of the Graduate Programs
3. One (1) Center Director
4. Three (3) Faculty Members
5. One (1) Student Representative

Duration of term: Each committee member shall typically serve for 2 years with the possibility of extension based on expertise and needs.

Frequency of Meetings: The Academic Committee currently meets once a month.

5. "Include stronger representation of the administrative staff in the Graduate School committees."

Response: Same as point 1.

6. "Further strengthen the involvement of students in program design and revision."

Response: Student participation in several Graduate School committees remains compulsory in support of students' active participation and engagement in the program's design and revisions. Additionally, students actively participate in the evaluation of the courses/programs/instructors through the anonymous submission of evaluation questionnaires at the end of every semester. Recent developments also include the establishment of focus groups and open floor discussions engaging students in order to provide their input and views on the programs.

7. Introduce formal pedagogical and didactic training and development for all teaching staff.

Response: Several opportunities for training and development are now available for all teaching staff to stay up-to-date with teaching pedagogies and refine their instructional methods. Specifically, the first pedagogical activity for the CyI faculty and other teaching staff involved the recent offering of a course on "*Teaching in Higher Education: Pedagogical Principles and Hands-on Applications*". The course was offered by CyI Assoc. Prof. Efthymia Nikita in November 2024. There was a strong participation and the course was endorsed by all participants. This course will be repeatedly offered so that all members of CyI faculty and teaching staff will have the opportunity to benefit from it.

Course information: This training program is designed for individuals who are involved in the education of students at the university level, such as teachers, tutors, mentors, and support staff. Its purpose is to enhance the participants' competences to teach, support, assess, and provide feedback to students in an effective, scholarly and professional manner. The training bridges the gap between theory and practice, facilitating participants to apply their learning experiences to their own work and become more confident educators. Over the duration of the program, attendees will receive direction in developing their ideas, skills, and methodologies to effectively co-create knowledge with the students under their care. Additionally, the training program will cover best practices for contemporary

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pedagogy in response to the changing landscape of higher education. To achieve these objectives, the program will be highly interactive and it will combine diverse training approaches.

Instructor information: Dr. Efthymia Nikita holds the position of Associate Professor of Bioarchaeology at the Science and Technology in Archaeology and Culture Research Center (STARC) of The Cyprus Institute. She obtained her undergraduate degree in Archaeology from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and her PhD in Biological Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. As part of her commitment to higher education teaching, she successfully completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education from the University of London and she is recognized as a Fellow of Advance Higher Education (UK), a distinction awarded to individuals whose teaching demonstrates proficiency in all aspects of the Professional Standards Framework. She has delivered lectures on various subjects, including bioarchaeology, Mediterranean archaeology, human skeletal anatomy, and applied statistics, to diverse audiences comprising undergraduate students, Masters and PhD students, post-doctoral fellows, and even university professors in Greece, Cyprus, and the UK. In recognition of her contributions to the field of past studies, she was awarded the Dan David Prize in 2022.

Additionally, Dr. Nikita has been specifically trained in the provision of high-quality teaching and learning practices in higher education and she has earned the following two diplomas:

- University Teaching, an online non-credit course authorized by The University of Hong Kong and offered through Coursera

- Inclusive Teaching: Supporting all students in the College Classroom offered by ColumbiaX, an online learning initiative by Columbia University.

8. *Address the gender imbalance in the student population.*

Response: Providing an inclusive environment for all its students is among the Graduate School's top priorities. Gender disparity is a general phenomenon in STEM fields. Therefore, the Graduate School as part of its efforts to address gender imbalances in its student population has implemented various strategies which include:

- Gender-Inclusive events: The CyI organizes the annual "sCYence Fair," which aims to stimulate scientific interest and encourage the participation of young students in support of the next generation of scientists from Cyprus. The event invites local schools to participate, introducing girls to scientific subjects early on to help dispel stereotypes associated with STEM. During the event, students get the opportunity to meet and interact with CyI women scientists who talk about their research in their areas of expertise. These women also share their experiences of choosing a career in STEM, ultimately acting as role models for these young minds by providing guidance, inspiration, and advice.

- Highlight Role Models: The success of women scientists at the CyI is being celebrated with special events organized for International Women's Day and the International Day of Women and Girls in Science such as the online event titled 'CyI Women and Girls in Science' that included seven short videos of CyI women scientists presenting their work in the field of their expertise. Social media posts and other types of content were published via the Graduate School's social media platforms and the CyI website.

- Dissemination: In line with CyI's goal to increase the visibility of women in the STEM professions in Cyprus and to encourage new generations of women to actively pursue careers in STEM fields, the Graduate School's educational programs have been extensively promoted through CyI's professional networks, encouraging young women to apply.

- Extracurricular Support: Additionally to the efforts made to attract women in our conventional programs, at the CyI we believe that we should also support extracurricular programs which can lead to higher numbers of women focusing in these disciplines. CyI provides resources and opportunities to young women to participate in summer/winter schools, internship programs and other extracurricular activities.

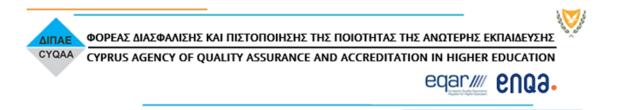*9. Increase the number of international students by developing and adopting a marketing strategy.*

Response: In line with its mission to attract and maintain a diverse, international cohort of highly competitive young scholars, the Graduate School has set among its top priorities to increase international student numbers by developing a targeted, well-researched marketing strategy. An intensified recruitment campaign has been planned to target Cyprus and the neighborhood countries in line with CyI's mission to serve as a gateway for research and technology between the European Research Area and the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East Region (EMME).

This intensified marketing strategy will be based on the following:

- Market Research: We have conducted a market analysis and investigated the demand for the program and its potential in specific neighboring countries, and a number of them have been identified as primary targets for our marketing campaign.

- Collaborations and Partnerships: CyI's international outlook is reflected in its involvement in over 1,000 projects and strategic partnerships (with partners from over 65 different countries), in the composition of our board of trustees, and our focus on research of regional relevance. Taking benefit of existing collaborations and partnerships, our students have the option to pursue their PhD studies at CyI jointly with internationally recognized institutions with which CyI maintains agreements for joint/dual degrees. This degree option is being promoted as an easier transition to postgraduate studies for international students.

  Moreover, it is anticipated that our strategic collaborations may create additional pathways for international students towards our educational programs through exchange programs and student visits. To this end, targeted events and activities are being organized in conjunction with these partners with the aim to attract postgraduate students from their organizations.

- Emphasize International Student Support: The Graduate School makes sure to provide its International Students with all the necessary support for the smooth commencement of their studies and guidance for every aspect of their student journey. The Graduate School also offers wellbeing support as well as career advising in collaboration with the student's supervisor and mentor. These services will be showcased and promoted through our recruitment campaigns.

- Financial Aid and Scholarships: Advertise and promote available scholarships for International students such as the A.G. Leventis MSc Scholarship established at The Cyprus Institute in 2023 through a donation by A. G. Leventis Foundation, which is a generous supporter of The Cyprus Institute. This scholarship enables one exceptional student from a low- to medium-income country (with a strong preference for students from West Africa) each year to undertake an MSc program at the Cyprus Institute. It is anticipated that the scholarship will be renewed every year and will be advertised thoroughly. The Graduate School is further exploring scholarship opportunities through its partnerships.

- Social Media Targeting: The Graduate School is further enriching its social media content with paid campaigns promoting its postgraduate programs to targeted regions creating connections with prospective students. Targeted content is being further enriched with testimonials from our alumni, scholarship opportunities, etc.

- Search Engine Marketing: We are currently reinforcing our Google Ads campaigns to increase CyI's online visibility, and visibility to the CyI Graduate School postgraduate programs, attract potential applicants anddrive targeted traffic to CyI's website etc.

- Recruitment platforms and campaigns and Educational Agents: The CyI Graduate School subscribes to different recruitment platforms, such as the Keystone Education Group, in support of its recruitment campaign. Its campaigns target International Student Recruitment through the dissemination and organization of educational fairs. Additionally, we have partnered with recruitment agents that are aligned with the profile and the mission of CyI.

- Targeted events:
    - Online open Days and Webinars: The Graduate School is organizing webinars, Q&A sessions, and virtual open days where students can interact with admissions staff, faculty, and current international students. Offering these events in multiple time zones accommodates students from around the world.

    - Fairs: The Graduate School is participating in educational fairs taking place in the EMME region.

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10. Encourage students to explore the many future options unlocked through this program.
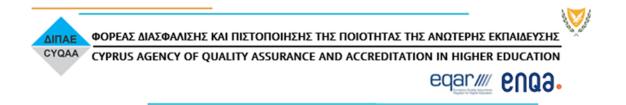
Response:

The reaccredited Master's program in High Performance Computing and Machine Learning offers many future options to the students:

- Integrated to CyI's research teams: The Graduate School maintains a small number of students that are fully integrated into the research activities of the Institute. This provides the students with the opportunity to acquire hands-on training in the use of the latest methods and techniques, have access to state-of-the-art infrastructure and conduct research with internationally recognized research teams that enhances students' employability.

- Internship: The program includes a mandatory internship aiming at a more extensive research, technological and industrial exposure of the students. The internship can be either internal in one of the institute's labs/groups or external in the industry (private/public sector). Both the internal and external internships aim to expose students to employment opportunities and to prepare them for a career as computational and data scientists in academia, and in the private and public sectors. Students may also pursue doctoral studies in a variety of computational and data science-related fields. External internships contribute to the enhancement of the links between the program and the industry and through these provide opportunities for the employment of the students in these organizations.

- Mobilities: Moreover, all of our programs are designed to provide students with opportunities to unlock a wide range of future possibilities through CyI's strategic partnerships and mobility programs supported by the ERASMUS + program. More specifically, the ERASMUS + Student Mobility for Traineeship allows students to participate in training and networking activities at partner institutions. Moreover, this traineeship program fosters skills like problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and time management. These transferable skills are critical in many industries and enhance students' employability across a wide range of careers.

- Extracurricular activities: Our students are allowed to participate in Transferable skills courses that aim to offer opportunities to students for further training and development. This initiative will
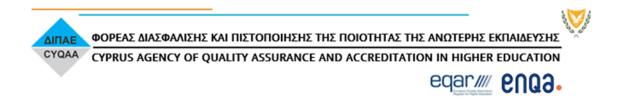
ensure that during the timeline of the students' studies, they will have the opportunity to further acquire a variety of transferable skills enabling them to become more competitive and prepared for the job market as graduates.

C. Other institutional action taken towards the implementation of ESG aiming at the improvement of the institution / department / programme of study.

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D. **Signatures of the Internal Quality Assurance Committee**

Name	Signature
Dr Nikolas Bakirtzis	
Dr Franco Marenco	
Dr Theodoros Christoudias	
Dr Kirsi Lorentz	
Dr Chrysanthia Leontiou	
Elias Kousoulos	

Date: 19/12/2024