

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 12/2/2021

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Cyprus School of Molecular Medicine
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study**
PhD Neuroscience (4 years, 240 ECTS, Doctor of Philosophy)

In Greek:
Διδακτορικό στη Νευροεπιστήμη

In English:
PhD in Neuroscience
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme'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. 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.300.1.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study 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. 300.1.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

Findings

The Cyprus School of Molecular Medicine is the postgraduate school of the Cyprus Institute of Neurology & Genetics. As a Center of Excellence in basic and applied research in biomedical and clinical sciences, it combines its three pillars: services, research and education. The institute has a small inpatient ward and receives about 7500 patients per year. It provides high quality health care for Cypriote residents. The school has a long-standing collaboration with the medical schools in Cyprus. The external evaluation committee (EEC) was highly impressed by the professionalism, dedication, achievements, coherence, and the general positive atmosphere in the institute. Founded in 2012, the school provides both medical services and teaching in the genetics of neurology and biomedical Sciences. It is a private foundation but also supported by the government and half of the board members are appointed by the government. The teaching staff is involved in basic and clinical research. The school is regularly visited by an international committee that evaluates the quality of the scientific output. The institute has about 2 million euros in funding, some by European granting agencies, some from the United States. They have MOU's with multiple international organizations. Unfortunately, the current evaluation was solely performed by an online "remote" evaluation due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so there was no "on-site" visit and evaluation.

Strengths

The institute is highly regarded in the local community, provides excellent services and has a collaboration with the medical schools in Cyprus. Teaching and research are clinically oriented. A major strength is its position in the Cyprus medical community, as an institute of excellence.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The school recruits internationally, but mainly from Greece and Cyprus and near Eastern countries.

In the last 3-4 years, and on an annual basis the CSMM has participated, in International Postgraduate education fairs in the UK and in Spain, in order to increase its applications from EU countries. Moreover, it has come to collaboration with the association of the expatriate Cypriots who are citizens of other EU countries in order to come closer to these EU countries and attract qualified applications. In addition it has earmarked a full MSc Scholarship, for any international student, with Cypriot ancestry, who wishes to study at the CSMM. The recruitment actions for the MSc actually serve the PhD recruitment as, often, the CSMM MSc graduates apply for the PhD programs. The above actions are in addition to the yearly promotion activities of the CSMM which include among others promotion in EU and other international online students' portals.

Although most students are recruited from Cyprus and Greece some of these students, have a dual nationality. For example out of 25 students recruited in 2020-21, 2 are from Greece, 1 from Iraq, 1 from Oman, 1 from Botswana, 1 from Russia, 18 are Cypriot and out of these 4 have dual Cypriot –EU nationality.

Finally, it should be noted that according to the existing regulations of the Ministry of Education the maximum of international student intake that we can have each year is limited to 20%. We would actually like this limit to increase and we will be grateful to the EEC if they can make the appropriate recommendations.



The school is starting to reach out to their alumni and it would be an opportunity to involve them more extensively in guest lectures. Fostering a strong relationship with alumni also creates an opening to potential future employers for the students.

The first MSc students graduated in 2013 and the first PhDs in 2016-17. We now have a pool of about 150 CSMM graduates creating a large enough community to launch the CSMM Alumni Association. To this end an initial get together event took place last year which was successfully attended by many CSMM graduates. Interest was collected for organising the Alumni Association and an event was planned to formalize it, but had to be postponed because of COVID-19 pandemic. We agree that the Alumni Association will add immense value to the CSMM, and we are proud to state that several CSMM graduates are working in prestigious Organizations, both within and outside Cyprus. We plan to form strong links with the CSMM Alumni in order to motivate the current students, increase their employment prospects, but also expose them to the wide range of opportunities and challenges that await them after graduation.

We are currently maintaining a database for our alumni which is regularly updated. Furthermore, alumni are involved in various CSMM Promotional activities.

The school should also reflect on overall strategy of masters courses: is the most important aim increasing biomedical expertise?

Although we have 9 Universities in Cyprus only one other University has MSc/PhD in Biomedical Sciences, so there is a need to increase the pool of Biomedical Scientists in Cyprus. There is an increasing demand for such graduates in the job market since there are several Medical degree courses, a growing health services sector, pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry. Importantly, research and innovation in the Health Sciences Sector is one of the priority areas in the smart specialization strategy of the Cyprus Government. The recent pandemic crisis has also highlighted the increasing needs for biomedical scientists in the future.

Does higher education in Cyprus need to build capacity for a PhD trajectory?

Indeed some of the MSc graduates continue on towards a PhD and this one of the aims of having the MSc/PhD tracks at the CSMM. In our experience more than 50% of the new PhD candidates are MSc graduates of the CSMM. We believe that building capacity for a PhD trajectory is a must for higher education in Cyprus in order to remain competitive at the international level and to facilitate innovation in the future.

Should the emphasis be on basic or clinical neurosciences?

Historically the CING/CSMM has pioneered the application of research in Medicine /Biomedicine in Cyprus covering both basic and Clinical applications. Indicative is the description and discovery of rare neurological diseases in Cyprus, together with their underlying genetic causes , as well as the generation of transgenic mice, manifesting specific neurological diseases. The CING is particularly strong in applied and translational neurosciences owing to its strong neurology services pillar, which is expected to remain a major activity in the future. Thus, it has the capacity to develop both basic and clinical neurosciences research, which is one of its competitive advantages within and outside Cyprus. The CING/CSMM philosophy and main emphasis is on excellence, allowing each of the faculty to

make the most of the available infrastructure and unique resources and to develop any direction of research within the wider neuroscience field.

The school needs to develop vision and strategy on how the different masters programs fit together.

Currently the CSMM offers the following four MSc programs: Medical Genetics, Molecular Medicine, Neuroscience and Biomedical Research. The four programs were organised based on:

- High International standards
- Market research
- Knowhow and expertise, infrastructure and critical mass available at CING
- Appeal and popularity to students
- Opportunities available to graduates in Cyprus and abroad

The programs fit well together as they combine the advantages of delivering both a broad postgraduate educational experience, with the insight of an in-depth knowledge in main stream disciplines, like Molecular Biology, Genetics and Neurosciences. The above knowledge is integrated with hands-on laboratory work, which exposes students to the latest state of the art methodologies and how these are applied, to solve clinical problems, or to advance basic research.

Strategy should also involve marketing issues e.g. how do the programs fit in with other higher education programs in Cyprus, what type of competition is there and is any synergy possible?

Although we have 9 Universities in Cyprus only one other University has MSc/PhD in Biomedical Sciences, so there is a need to increase the pool of Biomedical Scientists in Cyprus. There is an increasing demand for such graduates in the job market since there are several Medical degree courses, a growing health services sector, pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry. Importantly, research and innovation in the Health Sciences Sector is one of the priority areas in the smart specialization strategy of the Cyprus Government. The recent pandemic crisis has also highlighted the increasing needs for biomedical scientists in the future.

The CING in the past, before the establishment of its own school, the CSMM, has collaborated with other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad. This collaboration continues to some extent but now the CING can award its own degrees, through the CSMM. At this point, now that the CSMM has accumulated enough experience to operate on its own, it will examine the possibility to collaborate with other prestigious HEI in Cyprus and abroad in order to create synergies.

In terms of synergy, we actually did a joint program MSc/PhD with the department of Biological Sciences of the University of Cyprus and having been through this experience, decided to create our own autonomous programs. At the moment we believe that our programs are intensive and competitive as they stand. Pending the approval of the new FOREAS law and the upgrading of the CSMM, which will be made equivalent to Universities, initiatives will be undertaken to explore the potential of establishing joint degree programs with other esteem Universities (National or International).

As a result of the above, the CSMM targets specific markets which are more appealing, applying its Marketing plan which includes a combination of actions. These actions involve both traditional marketing such as advertisements in dedicated “students’ channels” and the online one such as advertisements in online students’ portals.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3)

Findings

The Cyprus School of Molecular Medicine is the postgraduate school of the Cyprus Institute of Neurology & Genetics. Please refer to the introductory paragraph above for a full description.

Strengths

Our impression, supported by student feedback, is that the quality of the teaching is excellent.

The programme has put in place an excellent Preparatory Course for students without a biological/medical sciences background. This is most effective and much appreciated by all of the students. An entrance exam following the introductory course ensures that the students are well prepared.

The faculty to student ratio is close to 1:1 and therefore optimal to provide adequate coaching.

A “teach-the-teacher” program ensures that junior faculty is trained.

A wide range of research areas appears to be on offer.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The school needs more flexibility for the program so that PhD students do not need to take some of the MSc level courses again. Most of the time, PhD students have sufficient self-reliance so that coaching of MSc students, courses outside their immediate expertise and other types of assignments could also count for the PhD program.

We thank the EEC for this recommendation. We are already contemplating the possibility of offering a more flexible PhD program.

At present PhD candidates are required to undertake 5 taught courses (3 mandatory and 2 electives), amounting to 50ECTS, plus 190 ECTS in research modules. This amounts to a total of 240 ECTS required, for the PhD award.

We would like to propose the following: PhD candidates are required to undertake 4 taught courses (3 mandatory and 1 elective), amounting to 40 ECTS, plus 200 ECTS in research modules. This is the same as the existing requirement for the PhD in Neuroscience and amounts to a total of 240 ECTS required for the PhD award.

In addition there is a need to make the PhD program available on both a full time as well as a part time basis; successful candidates are required to complete their PhD studies within 8 years (now the requirement is 6 years), following their registration.

As for the coaching by PhD students, this is already happening within the CING Departments where MSc students are hosted.

The PhD students should be encouraged to present their work at least on three occasions, present their project to independent faculty as if it were a new application. Faculty should coach PhD students and prepare them for grant writing, which they will certainly do if pursuing a research career.

The CSMM PhD candidates in year 3 and beyond, already present their project work in the CING JC series. In addition we had already planned to initiate an event this year, having acquired a sizeable student PhD community. This event would take the form of a CSMM annual research day, during which all active PhD students, in year 2 and beyond present work related to their PhD projects. However this was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. PhD students regularly present their work within the CING departments and also, in the second year of the PhD Program, they need to present their findings and presence to 3 member committee who provides feedback for further improvements. Furthermore, PhD students regularly present their interim research results in national and international scientific meetings.

Finally, all students (MSc and PhD) benefit from a series of transferable skills seminars which include among other, grant writing, scientific writing, citation management, presentation skills, poster presentation, bioethics, etc.

As the institute and the PhD program grows (new build) it may be helpful to consider if there are specific areas of expertise that should be a major focus for the budding PhD students, i.e. can the institute build on its enviable reputation of rare disease genetics and; or it may be the view that it should allow a broad range of biomedical programs to be propagated. Both options have their limitations and opportunities. Developing a clear overarching strategy for post-graduate biomedical education will be an advantage.

For research the strategy is to continue to generate competitive research that gains the recognition of the National and International Scientific communities and also attracts competitive funding. Using this pillar of research, as the springboard the CSMM strategy for education will continue to promote academic excellence and be of the highest quality. In going forward we are already preparing to create an umbrella PhD that will accommodate all CSMM MSc students, graduating from any of the currently offered four programs, namely Molecular Medicine, Medical Genetics, Neuroscience and Biomedical Research, as well as from the ones that are in the pipeline and will be introduced soon. This umbrella PhD will also provide the track for all CSMM MSc graduates to progress, without the current need to retake courses. In addition the new PhD will encourage interested MDs to also pursue research that leads to PhD, while they are carrying on with their clinical duties. This is in line with one of the main recommendations of the EEC to formulate a more flexible PhD program that facilitates the research track of MSc graduates. This will increase the quality and research output of both the CING/CSMM and strengthen the research landscape of our country.

Finally we share the recommendations of the EEC in that the programs offered reflect the mainstream activities and experience accumulated at CING, in not only rare genetic diseases ,but also are based on a broad range of Biomedicine. The latter will be reflected in the new programs that are being planned for the near future.

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Findings

The EEC was highly impressed by the professionalism, accomplishments, achievements, coherence of the teaching staff.

Strengths

There is a good age structure of the faculty and mentorship of younger faculty. The school has implemented a teach-the-teacher program and there is evaluation of teaching skills on a regular basis.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The school could try to involve some of the alumni and invite guest lecturers, e.g., from pharma and thereby introduce some of the potential future employers in the institute.

Currently, some of our MSc and PhD alumni are employed at CING and they are actively involved in teaching and students' supervision. This activity has already been initiated, even though we do not at present have a formalised Alumni Association. This academic year 2019-2020 we had planned for at least three lectures to be delivered by CSMM graduates: a doctor working at Hammersmith Hospital, Imperial College London, a PhD graduate working as a post-doc at the University of Columbia, New York and an MSc graduate who did his MSc at the CSMM, then did a PhD at University of Kingston, London, UK and is now working as a post-doc for a Biotech/Pharma Company in San Diego, California, USA. A guest professor on experimental Neurophysiology was planned to visit us from the University of Crete for a week to deliver additional teaching and workshops for Neuroscience Students, but the visit was cancelled twice in April and October 2020 due to the pandemic.

When the school will be moving to the new building, there should be a reflection on organization of education, career possibilities for younger and established faculty and succession planning for faculty that has reached the emeritus status.

We would like to thank the EEC for these constructive recommendations. Based on the success of the CSMM and the planned expansion into the new building the Scientific Council of the CING, has initiated discussions on how to strengthen the CSMM educational programs and offer more opportunities of the career path of young researchers. In order to achieve the above and increase the numbers of faculty as well as their career opportunities new regulations are being formulated.

When the school will be moving to the new building, there should be a reflection on organization of education

Two new MSc programs of high impact are in the final stages of being formulated and being submitted to FOREAS for approval. These programs are unique, do not currently exist in Cyprus, are in cutting edge areas and are in much demand. Both programs target a new pool of students and will create opportunities to collaborate with new stakeholders, strengthening the National /International role of both CING/CSMM.

Following the introduction of the above, a new PhD program, related to the above fields will also be established.

Career possibilities for younger and established faculty...

New regulations are in progress aiming to increase the number of CSMM faculty, through the departmental promotion of selected members to acquire the status of Principal Investigators. These individuals who will be proposed by the CING department Heads, will be charged with more research and academic duties. They will contribute more time to the activities of the CSMM and also have the duty of mentoring promising PhDs, towards becoming more competitive and productive post-docs. A structured mentorship program will be organized and put in place for this purpose.

Succession planning for faculty that has reached the emeritus status.....

As per the current CING regulations, retirement age is set at 65. Currently the most senior members of the CSMM faculty, who hold the rank of Professor are all Heads of Department. When they retire they are replaced by new Heads who are eligible to apply for ranking as CSMM faculty. This mechanism provides for new, talented and experienced Scientists and Doctors to contribute to the CSMM educational and research activities. In addition CING/CSMM have formulated regulations for awarding of Academic titles such as Emeritus, to only few and exceptional cases where these individuals add value and quality to their activities.

It may be worthwhile creating a mentorship program to enhance staff development.

We thank the EEC for this excellent recommendation. Staff development areas are reviewed and discussed yearly during the staff appraisal process where goals are set and appropriate mentorship steps are taken.



4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Findings

The students need to have a Bachelor degree from a recognized and accredited institution. There is a preparatory course which contains 9 lectures for candidates that come from outside the field of biomedicine, followed by an entrance exam. Communication and writing skills are evaluated through presentations and essays.

Strengths

Professional development of the students is evaluated and research integrity is promoted through courses on publication ethics and checks for plagiarism. All students have an academic and the research advisor even though the whole program is more research oriented. Emphasis is placed on transferable skills.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Mandatory attendance of courses should have a clear purpose. Distance learning, recording of lectures and formative evaluation should be promoted. Students should be encouraged to engage with broad topics. The faculty should consider career advice to students and prepare them for the post-doc stage.

CSMM adheres to the policies and guidelines provided by the Official bodies of the Republic of Cyprus. Until the pandemic begins, the policies in Cyprus clearly indicated that specific requirements were needed for a degree to be evaluated and approved under the distance learning / online mode. A degree which was not submitted as a distance learning degree, could not include online lectures. During the pandemic, the relative bodies of Cyprus permitted the offering of online lectures for obvious reasons. Following the completion of the pandemic, if the relative bodies in Cyprus revise the policies and permit the offering of online lectures, the CSMM will evaluate the new terms and make its decision while always having in mind the strong components of the learning experience at the CSMM such as the small number of students per lecture, the side-by-side work of the students and the academic staff and more.

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

Findings

From the administrative personnel we obtained information on admission and support of students both in terms of scholarships but also housing and other activities (also “extra-curricular”).

Strengths

The school provides support not only for housing but also in terms of migration permits. In case of trouble there is a confidence person and an academic advisor to turn to. There is a student council and student representatives are involved in all committees. Students with special needs can obtain additional time to pass the exam and also sometimes use of computer programs

The panel was impressed with the competence of the administrative support offered to the programs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Even though the courses are evaluated by the students, there is no clear feedback from the faculty about what is done with the information. There is just hearsay from the next generation of students about what was changed in the course in order to improve the quality. The quality assurance program therefore needs to provide feedback to the students.

There is a specific process after receiving the feedback from the students and this is followed since the early stages of the CSMM. This process involves the official bodies of the CSMM (i.e. Academic Committee and the Provost) which carefully review the analytical results, compare to previous years’ performance with the use of statistics, make meetings with the academic staff when needed to discuss and to set an action plan, provide recommendations and more. This process and generally the open channels for soliciting the students’ feedback has led to major improvements or/and some adjustments.

The results of the actions are always communicated to the students through the following channels:

- Meetings with the Class Representatives of all programs
- Emails to the group of students
- Communication on a one-to-one basis with the students.

The results of review process will be approved by the Quality Assurance Committee and also communicated to the students.



6. Additional for distance learning programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A

7. Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

Findings

For the PhD program the institute has one to two positions per year and there is a pre-interview evaluation phase assuring a good selection. In total they accepted 10 PhD students over a period of five years.

Strengths

There is excellent interaction between promoters and PhD students on a weekly basis. In the second year the PhD student presents a progress report and they also pass an examination. The number of PhD students is relatively low, so adequate coaching should be guaranteed.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

In the first year PhD students have mandatory courses 0101 and 102 which is a repetition of the courses they had in the Master's program. The faculty sees this as demotivating the students and they would certainly welcome some more flexibility in the PhD program. Bench cost should be contained, even though there are a number of fellowships reducing the cost for those students. When the school will grow and the PhD program expanded the school should consider making it more competitive, creating opportunities for incoming faculty while allowing established faculty to continue with a limited number of students.

We thank the EEC for this recommendation. Please note that CSMM MSc NEURO Graduates who are admitted to the PhD NEURO are exempted from all taught courses. In addition MSc graduates from other Universities (apart CSMM) can apply for ECTS exemptions for up to 2 out of 5 courses of the CSMM (as per Bologna Process) if students completed courses NEURO101 and NEURO102 during their MSc they do not repeat them in PhD neuroscience! There is no issue of students repeating courses they already passed. We are already contemplating the possibility of creating a single PhD umbrella that will provide the track to cover all MScs that are currently offered and are being planned by the CSMM.

Peer to peer learning for doctoral students may be a useful adjunct, for this modest sized cohort of students- sharing of expertise and structured journal clubs for example.

We thank the EEC for this suggestion. With the collaboration of the four program co-ordinators, Medical Genetics, Molecular Medicine, Neuroscience and Biomedical Research, additional targeted structured journal clubs presented by PhD students will be delivered as part of the JC CING educational activities. In addition, class representative are encouraged to organize scientific discussions among the students.



8. Additional for joint programmes

(ALL ESG)

Findings

Not applicable

Strengths

Not applicable

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Not applicable

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The EEC was favourably impressed by the quality of the staff, their dedication and their involvement in teaching, follow up and evaluation of the students. The school, its governing board and faculty should be commended for the development of this curriculum. The EEC hopes the school will flourish after having moved to the new building.

Most important final recommendations:

We recommend that the school further develops its marketing strategy.

The CSMM participates in various fairs locally and globally, using offline and online promotional means as well as a competitive scheme of scholarships exclusively for the international audience, aiming to reach to as many quality international students as possible.

With a growing number of students both on the master's level as well as in the PhD program, the school should try to maintain the high quality of research and education.

The mission of the CING is to operate as a Regional Centre of Excellence in the areas of Neurology, Biomedical and Forensic Sciences. In striving to achieve this mission CING/CSMM promote the execution of specialised services, excellent research and quality education.

The school should turn towards Europe as well as the Middle-East for recruitment of new students as well as faculty.

In the last 3-4 years, and on an annual basis the CSMM has participated, in International Postgraduate education fairs in the UK, in order to increase its applications from EU countries. In addition it has earmarked a full MSc Scholarship, for any international student, with Cypriot origins, who wished to study at the CSMM. The above actions are in addition to the yearly promotion activities of the CSMM.

As for faculty since the MSc programs have been designed and embody the long standing experience and knowhow accumulated by the CING personnel then there are plenty of suitable candidates to fill the faculty positions available at the CSMM. Having stated this all new Faculty positions are advertised internationally, in order to also attract talent from outside. In addition the CSMM encourages visiting Faculty appointments.

Consideration as to the overall aims of the masters programs- are they to create the next generation of researchers through identification of the best students for PhD?;

Indeed some of the MSc graduates continue on towards a PhD and this is one of the aims of having the MSc/PhD tracks at the CSMM. In our experience more than 50% of the new PhD candidates are MSc graduates of the CSMM and continue for further postgraduate & MD studies abroad.

Are they to create wealth and health for Cypriot population?

The CSMM programs are an exemplary example, which combines postgraduate education with hands on professional experience. With the three pillars, comprising specialised diagnostic services, research and education, going on under one roof, combined with the exposure of students to the visiting patients, this provides a stimulating

environment for the students. In addition most of the CSMM research projects are translational and target the investigation of human diseases, exposing the students to real life and challenging problems related to many human disorders. This enhances the motivation of the students to engage in health related problems.

Are they to further develop the biomedical intellectual infrastructure of Cyprus?; or a mix of the above.

Although we have 9 Universities in Cyprus only one other University has MSc/PhD in Biomedical Sciences, so there is a need to increase the pool of Biomedical Scientists in Cyprus. There is an increasing demand for such graduates especially, since currently there are three Medical Universities, offering 4 Medical degree courses. This creates a demand for biomedical graduates to work as teachers and tutors for whom the demand is increasing because the Government strategy is pushing for research and innovation especially in Health.

Such strategic thinking will enable a clear plan as to what they want to achieve following the expansion in the new building.

The expansion of CING provides a much needed and long awaited opportunity to strengthen the National and Regional role of the CING/CSMM. The strategy includes the introduction and establishment of new infrastructures and technologies, via the recruitment of new Group Leaders. These will function as core facilities and will be well integrated into the current CING backbone, increasing critical mass and the current knowledge base. CING will become more competitive in research and this combined with the planned new CSMM programs, will strengthen the regional role of CING/CSMM, expand it's stakeholder share and create a new momentum for attracting talented students and early career scientists.

A clear joined up strategy (there may be one that we did not see during our online visit) to allow clarity as to goals of post-graduate education- for example- how many masters to feed the PhD scheme, what size of PhD schemes and what areas to focus on etc could be helpful.

Since the beginning of it's operations the policy of the CSMM is to admit about 25 MSc students and about 7-8 PhD students across all its programs, annually. Currently these numbers are determined by the capabilities of the 16 CING departments to host prospective students, for executing their research projects. With the introduction of new CSMM programs and the expansion of CING, we anticipate that the number of students will increase by another 50 % over the next 4-5 years. The determining factors will be the following:

With the future expansion of CING and the creation of new research groups, this will also contribute to an increase in the number of students that can be hosted within the CING premises.

The two MSc programs that are being planned, will be delivered in collaboration with other organisations who will also be able to host CSMM students for executing their projects. This will increase the number of departments that can host CSMM students.

As discussed the strategy for Internationalization of the CSMM is going well, for example this year 5 out of 24 MSc student are international. We are keen to continue this strategy as this also strengthens the regional role of the CING, so if we are able to recruit more students we will sign MoUs with their respective organisations, enabling some of these students to carry out their research projects, in their home country. This will overcome some of the restrictions imposed by the limiting availability of hosting departments in Cyprus.

The areas of focus will be Genetics/Molecular Biology/Neurosciences and related fields, where CING has gained international recognition.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Leonidas Phylactou	Professor, Provost of the CSMM and CEMD of CING	
Kyriacos Kyriacou	Emeritus Professor, Dean of the CSMM	
Kleopas Kleopa	Professor, Co-ordinator of the MSc/PhD Program in Neuroscience	
Marios Flouros	Financial and Administrative Director, CING	
Maria Lagou	Manager of the CSMM Academic Office	

Date: 05/03/2021

