



Doc. 300.1.2

Date:

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Institute of Professional Studies (IPS) at UCLan Cyprus University

- **Town:** Larnaca

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

In Greek:

Επαγγελματικό Δίπλωμα στη Γεωργοκτηνοτροφία (2 έτη/120 ECTS, Δίπλωμα

In English:

Professional Diploma in Agriculture (2 years/120 ECTS, Diploma

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].



A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 2nd column of each table, the HEI must respond on the following:*
 - *the areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The institution should respond to the EEC comments, in the designated area next each comment. The comments of the EEC should be copied from the EEC report **without any interference** in the content.*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on separate document(s). Each document should be in *.pdf format and named as annex1, annex2, etc.*



1. Study programme and study programme's design and development
 (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The EEC was unable to locate online official policy documents pertaining to quality standards and the responsible Academic Boards, Exam Committees etc.</p> <p>The process of reviewing and updating the course curriculum is happening internally every year, involving relevant staff and also student opinion. However, this process should be formalised and documented.</p> <p>Also, the 'agribusiness' component suggested in the programme title does not seem to be represented adequately in the course content. Furthermore, the 'specialisations' are unclear and need to be articulated and advertised online clearly (the online information is outdated). In general, online information on the programme is not satisfactory.</p>	<p>In response to your concerns regarding the online information and policies of the EEC related to quality standards, responsible Academic Boards, Exam Committees, curriculum review process, course content, specializations, and overall program information, please note the following</p> <p>We acknowledge that the EEC has been unable to locate official policy documents pertaining to quality standards and the responsible bodies such as Academic Boards and Exam Committees. We apologize for any inconvenience caused by this lack of documentation. We understand the importance of formalizing and documenting these policies and procedures. You can find the relevant documents attached in Annexes (regulation policies, student handbook and employees' book)</p> <p>Regarding the curriculum review process, we appreciate your feedback on the need for formalization and documentation. While the process of reviewing and updating the course curriculum has been happening internally every year and includes the involvement of relevant staff and student opinion, we acknowledge that documenting this process is essential. We are committed to implementing a formalized procedure for curriculum review and ensuring that it is adequately documented to enhance transparency and accountability.</p> <p>Furthermore, we have taken note of your concerns regarding the representation of the 'agribusiness' component in the course content and the lack of clarity in the 'specializations' offered. We understand the importance of aligning the course content with the program title and providing clear information about the specializations. We decided to remove the 'agribusiness' from the title of the course. Additionally, efforts are being made to</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



	<p>articulate and advertise the specializations clearly and accurately on our online platform.</p> <p>We sincerely apologize for the outdated online information and any dissatisfaction it may have caused. We are aware of the issue and are in the process of improving the online information to provide a more comprehensive and satisfactory user experience. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we work to address these concerns.</p>	
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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment
 (ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The EEC observed some inconsistency in the usage of 5 and 10 ECTS credit ratings for modules and the assessments allocated. It is recommended to review this.</p> <p>The reading lists in several module descriptors need to be updated to reflect modern teaching content and approaches and to increase student engagement (e.g. through selected material from the popular media, podcast). Note that reading lists also need to be linked to actual books and sources stocked in the library (see Point 5.1 below).</p> <p>In terms of assessments, the EEC has observed a number of aspects that should be improved. In general, the type of assessment should be relevant to the practical nature and skills of the course. For example, written exams could be replaced by herbaria, laboratory exercises and worksheets, field visit reflections, blogs and similar more engaging assessments.</p> <p>Given the nature of the course, the EEC recommends that practical, hands-on learning opportunities are expanded. For instance, practical laboratory or field based opportunities should be offered to acquire identification skills of crops, weeds, crop pests, crop diseases, livestock parasites. This view was reinforced by the students themselves.</p> <p>One deficient but cross-cutting area in terms of course content identified by the EEC relates to 'sustainability', which should permeate all modules. This includes topics such as climate change, soil protection, biodiversity</p>	<p>Firstly, the EEC has noted some inconsistencies in the usage of 5 and 10 ECTS credit ratings for modules and their corresponding assessments. We acknowledge the importance of maintaining consistency in credit allocation and agree that a review of the credit ratings and their alignment with the assessments is necessary. We will conduct a thorough evaluation to ensure the appropriate and consistent assignment of credit ratings to modules and assessments.</p> <p>Regarding the reading lists in module descriptors, we recognize the need to update them to reflect modern teaching content and approaches, as well as to enhance student engagement. We understand the value of incorporating materials from popular media, podcasts, and other relevant sources. Additionally, we acknowledge the importance of linking the reading lists to actual books and sources stocked in the library. We will undertake the necessary steps to update the reading lists accordingly and ensure that they are accessible to students. In addition, you can find attached the module descriptions with the updated books. (Annexes attached)</p> <p>The EEC has rightly pointed out certain areas for improvement in assessments. We agree that assessments should align with the practical nature and skills of the course. We will consider the EEC's recommendations and explore alternative assessment methods, such as herbaria, laboratory exercises and worksheets, field visit reflections, blogs, and other engaging assessments that better reflect the practical aspects of the course. These changes will contribute to a more comprehensive and relevant evaluation of students' knowledge and skills.</p> <p>We acknowledge the EEC's recommendation to expand practical, hands-on learning</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



<p>decline, water conservation, animal welfare, along with the technologies and solutions.</p>	<p>opportunities within the course. We understand the value of providing students with practical laboratory or field-based experiences to develop their identification skills related to crops, weeds, crop pests, crop diseases, and livestock parasites. We appreciate the support of the students themselves in reinforcing this perspective. Efforts will be made to expand such opportunities and enhance the practical components of the course accordingly. Also, you can find attached the names of our industry partners where our students can have access to everything we mention above.</p> <p>The EEC has identified a cross-cutting area of deficiency in course content, particularly the lack of emphasis on sustainability. We agree that sustainability is a crucial topic that should permeate all modules. This includes addressing subjects such as climate change, soil protection, biodiversity decline, water conservation, animal welfare, as well as related technologies and solutions. We recognize the importance of integrating these topics into the curriculum and we added them into all relevant modules to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of sustainability issues.</p>	
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3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>In general, standards for teaching staff need to be reviewed and improved. Given the high proportion of part-time teaching staff, it is particularly important that full staff training is provided in all areas of Teaching & Learning (e.g. 17 pedagogy, teaching technology, assessment strategies, student engagement). The EEC did not gain insights into the recruitment, development and promotion policies and procedures. However, they are paramount (especially for the full-time staff) and need to be considered by the institutions. One example is opportunities for staff mobility through appropriate EU and national schemes such as ERASMUS, which could improve both teaching skills and exposure to research that, in turn, would enhance teaching.</p>	<p>We recognize the significance of ensuring that teaching staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality education. We will conduct a thorough review of our current staff training programs to identify areas for improvement. Our goal is to provide comprehensive training opportunities to all teaching staff, including part-time instructors, to enhance their pedagogical skills and familiarize them with teaching technologies and effective assessment strategies. By investing in staff training, we aim to improve the overall quality of teaching and student engagement.</p> <p>We are pleased to tell you that the HR department is actively organizing seminars and training sessions for teaching staff every year. These opportunities for professional growth are essential in keeping our staff up to date with the latest pedagogical techniques, teaching technologies, assessment strategies, and student engagement approaches. By providing regular training, we aim to empower our teaching staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver effective and engaging education.</p> <p>We recognize the value of these seminars and training sessions as platforms for sharing best practices, exchanging ideas, and enhancing collaboration among our teaching staff. We are committed to supporting and encouraging participation in these events to foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Through these initiatives, we strive to create an environment that values professional development and empowers our teaching staff to excel in their roles.</p> <p>Additionally, the EEC has highlighted the importance of recruitment, development, and promotion policies and procedures, particularly for full-time staff. While the EEC did not gain</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



insights into our specific policies and procedures, we understand their significance and commit to considering them in our institutional practices. We are pleased to inform you that our institution has an employee handbook that serves as a comprehensive resource for our staff. This handbook includes detailed information on various policies and procedures related to recruitment, development, and promotion. It provides guidance and outlines the processes and criteria involved in these areas.

We apologize for the lack of insights provided to the EEC regarding the specific policies and procedures. It may have been a communication oversight, and we regret any confusion caused. However, we assure you that we have robust policies and procedures in place, which are clearly documented in the employee handbook. (Annexes)

We appreciate the EEC's recommendation to consider these policies and procedures, especially in relation to recruitment, development, and promotion of full-time staff. We are committed to ensuring transparency, fairness, and equal opportunities for all our employees. The employee handbook serves as a valuable resource, providing clarity and guidelines for these processes.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention and providing us with the opportunity to clarify our existing policies and procedures. Should you have any further questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

We would like to inform you that our institute is actively pursuing opportunities to participate in Erasmus programs. We recognize the value of international mobility and the benefits it brings to both teaching staff and students. By engaging in Erasmus initiatives, we aim to enhance our teaching methods, broaden our cultural perspectives, and strengthen our collaboration with international institutions.

Furthermore, in response to the EEC's recommendations, we are committed to increasing the number of full-time staff members in comparison to part-time staff. We understand the importance of providing stability and continuity in our teaching faculty to ensure consistent and high-quality education. By expanding our full-time staff, we aim to enhance our capacity to deliver comprehensive instruction, support student learning, and provide additional resources for professional development.

These initiatives align with our dedication to continuous improvement and our commitment to providing an enriching educational experience for our students. We value the feedback provided by the EEC and are actively taking steps to implement these measures.

Thank you for your support and trust in our institution. We look forward to further enhancing our educational offerings through international programs and an increased focus on full-time staff recruitment.



4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
No observations.	<p>Thank you for the positive comments and recognition of our strengths provided by the EEC. We appreciate the acknowledgment of our efforts in student recruitment and inclusivity.</p> <p>We are proud to maintain an inclusive approach to student recruitment, ensuring that our efforts target a diverse audience of both male and female. We believe in providing equal opportunities for all students and strive to create an inclusive learning environment that values diversity and promotes equal access to education.</p> <p>Furthermore, we are pleased to offer students the opportunity to transfer to bachelor's degree programs, subject to meeting the criteria for a Distinction. This pathway provides our students with the flexibility to pursue higher levels of education and expand their knowledge in their chosen fields of study.</p> <p>We value the EEC's feedback and recognition of these positive aspects of our institution. It serves as an affirmation of our commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and academic advancement. We will continue to prioritize these principles and provide the necessary support and opportunities for our students' educational and personal growth.</p>	Choose level of compliance:



5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Related to student mobility, introducing opportunities such as residential field trips or short-term international placements should be considered.</p> <p>It is the opinion of the EEC that the teaching laboratory is not adequate for this programme. To enhance practical learning (this is linked with Point 2.2 above), these facilities need to be upgraded. As was also identified in the previous report, access for student teaching to other facilities (such as livestock premises, greenhouses, experimental fields) should be sought.</p>	<p>Thank you for suggesting the introduction of residential field trips and short-term international placements to enhance student mobility. We appreciate your input and will consider these opportunities to provide students with practical experiences and global perspectives. Your suggestion aligns with our commitment to offering comprehensive and enriching educational opportunities. We value your support and will explore these options further for the benefit of our students.</p> <p>In addition, we would like to highlight that we are actively collaborating with Erasmus+ for field trips abroad, specifically for training and learning purposes. Through our partnership with Erasmus+, we aim to provide our students with valuable opportunities to engage in international experiences, broaden their horizons, and gain practical skills in various fields. We are excited about the prospects that this collaboration offers and are committed to maximizing the benefits for our students.</p> <p>We appreciate the EEC's feedback regarding the adequacy of the teaching laboratory for our program and the need for enhancements to facilitate practical learning. We understand the importance of providing students with modern and well-equipped facilities to support their educational experiences.</p> <p>While it was noted in the previous report that access to additional facilities such as livestock premises, greenhouses, and experimental fields should be sought, we have found that maintaining partnerships with various businesses in the industry offers significant advantages to our institute and students. These partnerships provide access to state-of-the-art equipment, modern technology, and innovative ideas that align with the current industry practices. Collaborating with these external entities ensures that our students are exposed</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



to the latest developments and have hands-on experiences with cutting-edge tools and techniques. See annexes for our industry partners.

Regarding the greenhouse facilities, we are pleased to inform you that we are currently in the process of establishing our own greenhouse adjacent to our premises. This initiative will enable us to provide dedicated space for practical learning and experimentation in a controlled environment.

We believe that our strategic approach of collaborating with industry partners and investing in specialized facilities like the greenhouse allows us to optimize resources, stay up to date with technological advancements, and provide students with comprehensive learning opportunities.

Thank you for bringing these concerns to our attention. We are committed to continuously improving our facilities and providing the best possible learning environment for our students.



6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The EEC concludes that, overall, this programme is well-placed to produce qualified graduates for the agricultural sector in Cyprus and beyond. The programme is well-structured, the teaching staff are motivated, and the students enjoy full supports from the university services as well as excellent physical facilities. Student satisfaction is high and the links with industry and employment are strong.</p> <p>The EEC identified a number of areas that need to be improved. Specifically, some quality assurance processes need to be formalised (e.g. annual programme review); teaching materials and assessments need to be updated regularly; more training and development opportunities for teaching staff are needed; scientific laboratory facilities should be upgraded.</p>	<p>We appreciate the EEC's comprehensive evaluation and constructive feedback. We will take these recommendations seriously and work towards addressing the identified areas for improvement. Our commitment to maintaining high standards and continuously enhancing the program aligns with our goal of providing an excellent education to our students and preparing them for successful careers in the agricultural sector.</p> <p>Thank you to the EEC for their thorough assessment and valuable insights. We value their expertise and will utilize their feedback to drive positive changes and further enhance the program.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

C.



D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Signature</i>
Floros Voniatis	Director		
Constantinos Voniatis	Manager		
Athanasia Angelou	Course Leader / Lecturer in Agriculture School		
Stella Komodromou	QA Expert, Instructor of Agriculture School		

Date: 03/07/2023