

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 12/02/2021

- **Higher Education Institution:**
NEAPOLIS UNIVERSITY
- **Town:** PAFOS
- **Programme(s) of study** – Bachelor of Laws (8 semesters, 240 ECTS)
- **In Greek:**
Πτυχίο στη Νομική (LLB)
- **In English:**
Bachelor of Laws (LLB)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** GREEK
- **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].

Introduction.

The site visit took place on the 9th of November 2020 between 10.00 and 17.00 online via Zoom. All committee members were present. We could watch the power point presentations beforehand. In addition, we had a virtual tour through the buildings, and we were sent a recorded lecture which we could watch afterwards. We spoke to students, graduates, teaching staff, support staff. The visit was well-prepared, and we met a highly motivated staff, and committed students and alumni. They provided us with the necessary information on the mission of the University, its strategy. The organizational structure, budget, research income, student support. Quality insurance and societal impact were sufficiently explained, and concrete examples were given. During the remote visit committee members were given the opportunity to ask questions, the discussions were fruitful. We appreciated the openness of the Rector, the head of the Department and all colleagues (academic staff and support staff). We were impressed by the commitment, which was also attested by the students and alumni. We appreciated what has been achieved in less than a decade and we observed a willingness to constantly keep improving. At the end of the day, we had a final session with the Rector and the Head of department in which we could ask additional questions for clarification. We also asked for some additional information with respect to the student evaluation feedback cycle, events and publications, which we promptly received. Without having been able to visit the University we feel we got a good and realistic impression of an ambitious and active department with a solid Bachelor in Laws programme

Comment:

Let us first express our satisfaction for the very positive comments of the EEC as well as the productive suggestions and recommendations. Though we, of course, recognize the fact that the ultimate decision is always taken by the CYQAA Board, we nevertheless emphasize the overall EEC’s attitude to have the program accredited by stating at the conclusions that:

“The Committee believes that the LLB programme is clearly compliant with the applicable standards of assessment and gladly recommends its accreditation.”

Since it is our belief and principle that there is always room of improving the quality of the University and the said Programme, we hereby enclose our response to **FULLY satisfy the EEC** suggestions and recommendations, which we found very useful and productive.

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

Findings for Bach of Law LLB

After going through the presentations and reading the documentation, the EEC had a full day of remote conversations with several panels from Neapolis University and from the Department of Law in which the EEC could ask many questions. The atmosphere was open and the committee noticed that the staff is highly motivated to offer high quality education. All staff members seemed very engaged and reflective. The management explained that the undergraduate program Bachelor of Laws (LLB) with a Greek and a Cyprus-strand is guided by the University's general mission, which is aiming at excellence in teaching, research, and service to the community. The LLB is designed to meet local and (inter)national needs, promotes links with local communities and embraces modern pedagogy and increasingly student-centred learning technologies. The department and the staff within the programme demonstrate a robust culture of quality and quality control in which feedback from students and staff members are considered. The program has been designed to meet the requirements of the labour market in Greece and Cyprus, staff members also have influence on the content of the courses, the methods and the materials used. The success rate is high and graduates who take the Bar exams have all been admitted so far. The university collects and analyses data on study results, labour market position of graduates etc. The programme is coherent, but the committee does recommend looking into the possibility of changing the order of some courses as explained below.

Strengths for Bach of Law LLB

The programmes have been well-designed in accordance with the relevant frameworks. the two strands (Greek & Cypriot) successfully target different labour markets. The professors almost all appear to teach in their area of expertise, which ensures good quality teaching and a connection between teaching and research. All students have an academic adviser and can fall back on the support structure at the central level. The quality assurance cycle is transparent and staff members are constantly trying to improve and to offer high quality teaching and support.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Bach of Law LLB.

The website contains the basic information about the LLB. Some more detailed information about extracurricular activities and more information about the offered courses would be recommended. The handbook should be updated in order to correct several spelling mistakes. The curriculum should be revised in order to avoid exposure of student to more complicated courses at the very beginning of their studies, e.g. NOM129-Public International Law. The committee recommends introducing training in Legal English for this programme to prepare graduates for a job in the internationalising world.

Response 1:

Done: We have transferred the course NOM129-Public International Law from the 1st Semester to the 3rd Semester for both the Cypriot Law route and the Greek Law route of the LLB Program. In the place of NOM129, first year students of the LLB will be able to take an elective course. For the detailed tables of courses with the aforementioned revision, (see the revised text of the application, Annex6_ LLB LAW NUP Application ENG.doc)

Response 2:

Done: The School of Law will offer training in Legal English as a part of its Legal Writing and Research Skills Seminars, a module that will be enhanced and expanded to include this training. The Legal Writing and Research Skills Seminars is an opportunity for students to improve their legal writing skills, in Greek and in English, in a “learn-by-doing” format. Participating students attend presentations on effective writing strategy and techniques, participate in writing and editing exercises and receive constructive feedback of their work. The objective is to familiarize students with the use of legal research tools (legal databases on national, European and International Law) and to teach them effective writing techniques for drafting legal motions, briefs, and memoranda in Greek and in English.

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

Findings for Bach of Law LLB.

The Bachelor of Law (LLB) is organised in accordance with the existing legislation and complies with the professional qualification requirements both in Cyprus and in Greece. The diploma that the students obtain in the end of their studies, allows them to enrol at the Cypriote and Greek Bar Associations for their traineeship. The studies are complemented with an online educational platform (Moodle) that facilitates the communication between the students and the lecturers. The curriculum is complemented with a number of activities, including Moot Courts, a legal clinic etc.

The teaching staff is delivering high quality teaching, they support the student through the Advisors program and are accessible to them. Even during the COVID-19 times the lectures are delivered online and the online session that the committee members followed ensured high quality of teaching, engagement of both the lecturer and the students and motivation of the critical thinking of students.

Student assessments play an important role in the evaluation of lecturers and courses. The evaluation is carried out via questionnaires in Moodle Platform. The questionnaires aim to measure the quality of the lessons and the quality of teaching. The evaluations are done every academic semester for all the courses.

Strengths for Bach of Law LLB.

The Bachelor of Law (LLB) has endorsed the appointment of Academic Personal Advisors in undergraduate and postgraduate study programs at NUP, who to meet at least once a semester with their students to discuss course options. The teaching staff is organising Moot Courts, UN Model simulation, Legal Clinics and Legal writing and research seminars. Especially in the field of criminal law and international/European law the activities are rich and rewarding for the students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Bach of Law LLB.

Students can choose the placement programme as an elective in their curriculum, an initiative that is currently being established. Besides issues relating to confidentiality, the employment status of the students etc, special attention should be paid to the calculation of the ECTS points and the assessment method for this initiative.

Enhancement of the collaborations with professional bodies in Cyprus and Greece would deepen the integration of theory and practice. Especially with regard to organisations based in Greece, the Department could take advantage of online collaboration tools.

Although, student-centered learning and teaching plays an important role in simulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process, further options should be explored for student-centred learning and novel teaching methods that complement traditional lectures. In our view, the department could use its existing staff expertise to enhance its teaching programmes by reference to topical issues, such as Anti-Money Laundering (ALM) regulation and compliance.

Response:

Done. In the teaching framework of Law Department study Programmes a simulation of Justice delivery system both at national and international level has been incorporated with the participation of students, tutors and judicial officers. The current moot Court is referred to International Court of Hague, to European Court of Human Rights, to European Court of Justice and the International Court of the Law of the Sea.

The new enhanced learning process from the academic year 2020-2021 includes a virtual penal trial before national court and simulation exercises before international Institutions (UN & Council of Europe).

Furthermore, a legal Clinic has been established on topics "Human Rights on Occupied Cyprus " and the Centre of International Law "Georgios Tenecides" aiming to promote the study and research of Republic of Cyprus and Greece place as well in the international legal order implementations.

Aiming to implement a new, enhanced learning process, which from the academic year 2020-2021 includes a virtual trial (criminal law and criminal procedure), simulation exercise (international law), specialized seminars and legal workshops to support the students (commercial law, civil law, public law)

So, in order to achieve all these, the School of Law has integrated a series of formative activities, in particular moot court exercises, in the courses curricula and syllabi.

More specifically, the Moot Court in International and EU law exercise has been integrated in the courses Public International Law (NOM129), Law of the European Union (NOM227), International Criminal Law (NOM378), International Economic Law (NOM380) and Aviation Law (NOM372). The Moot Court in Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure has been integrated in the course Synthesis of Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure (NOM 468), which combines knowledge of both substantive criminal law and criminal procedure. Finally, the Legal Clinic has been integrated in the course of International Protection of Human Rights (NOM127).

Other similar training and educational activities, such as visits to courthouses, have been integrated in the courses NOM 121, 221, 117, 329, 364 & 468. Syllabi are available in the revised text of the application (see Annex6 _ LLB LAW NUP Application ENG.doc).

The University also, during the last months, proceeded in the signing of a MOU with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Commissioner of Presidency of Cyprus Republic as well, (see Annexes 4,5)

We were provided with several examples of student assessment that are part of the overall evaluation reports. The student assessments contained only numerical scores and no qualitative feedback, which limits their usefulness for the assessed member of staff. We believe that the existing process for translating student feedback into teaching improvement is improved in order to work in practice and not just in theory. Greater emphasis on qualitative feedback (e.g. 'Strengths', 'Weaknesses', 'Action Points') in Supervisor and Self-Assessment Reports would be a step in the right direction.

Response:

Done, relative templates have been revised and uploaded in order to include reference to strengths, weaknesses and concrete action points, (see Annex 2, revised template staff performance evaluation.)

3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

Findings for Bach of Law LLB.

Overall, the Committee was favourably impressed by the Department's research profile. Excellence in research is axis 2 of the Department's Strategic Mission. Generally, that mission is adequately supported by the existing procedures and facilities. Research and teaching are wellintegrated. At the same time, the Committe believes that the University could do more to facilitate colleagues' participation in international conferences, and to integrate existing Cypriot legal databases into its programme for improving LLB students' research skills. The Department's application was very thorough, and the Department was very responsive to our request to receive the most up-to-date versions of the faculty's publication records. We reviewed those records, the Department's research plan, and the research-related components of the LLB programme. During our visit, we had the opportunity to discuss some issues and put questions to to the Rector, the Head of the Department, and members of the faculty. Our discussion focused on balancing teaching workload with internationally excellent research, the challenges of publishing in Cypriot/Greek journals that have limited international visibility, and support for research by means of sabbatical leave and funding for conference attendance. At the end of our visit, we were also able to attend remotely a teaching session in Company Law

Strengths for Bach of Law LLB.

The Department has a clear policy on supporting research, and its processes appear to be applied fairly and consistently. Members of the Department have a consistent record of publication in both international and Cypriot/Greek outlets. Research and teaching are well integrated in that colleagues' teaching overlaps very tightly with their research expertise. The Rector assured us that applications for research funding and sabbatical leave are favourably treated, though the small number of faculty imposes some obvious limits in that regard.

Although still a very young institution, the Department has been able to hire a strong group of scholars at all levels of seniority. The Head of Department is a leading scholar with broad and extensive experience. All staff are very qualified, and their specialisms and expertise support the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) effectively. The Visiting Professors complement the expertise of permanent staff very well, and their employment appears to preserve the 70/30 ratio.

Special teaching staff are qualified in their areas, and their teaching hours as stated in the application (p. 132) suggest that they are relied on in an appropriate fashion. The ratio of subjects per member of permanent teaching staff is appropriate, and so is the overall staff/student ratio. The teaching session we attended remotely was very well run, with clear explanations of Company Law concepts, and interactive class discussion.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Bach of Law LLB.

We identified two main areas of improvement:

1. Given the high teaching load per member of academic staff, the Committee believes that the University can and should do more to support the development of colleagues' research through support for conference funding. At present, support is provided only for conferences in which a member of staff is presenting. We believe that such support should be extended to cover mere attendance at important international conferences, particularly for junior academic staff. This is not likely to involve huge costs, especially as more international conferences are bound to move online.

Response:

Done. We proceeded in the hiring of a new faculty member currently being full Law Professor of Reading University (Prof. Tryfonidou Alina <https://www.reading.ac.uk/law/about/staff/a-tryfonidou.aspx>) in order to strengthen the overall actual capacity of Department and reduce the high teaching load of faculty members, (see Annex 1, new staff member CV)

Also, Research policy has been revised accordingly in order to include and cover mere attendance of academic staff at important international conferences, (see Annex 3, Revised Research Policy, Neapolis University Research Office (NRO), chapter 5)

2. It was not clear to us that the Department's plan for enhancing students' research skills integrates the two main Cypriot legal databases. CYLAW and Leginet. Their prominence and use in the legal profession makes them obvious focal points for students' research skills training.

Response:

Done. We proceeded to the registration in Leginet data base, (see Annex 8_ Invoice 56). So, currently the available databases with subscription are, as below:

- 1 Westlaw
- 2 LexisNexis
- 3 Leginet
- 4 Sakoulas-online.gr

In parallel, a large number of free access Law portals and databases is available for use from Neapolis academic Law community (see Annex9_ free access law databases)

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Findings for Bach of Law LLB

The provisions regarding admission, progression, recognition and certification are typical of an LLB programme and overall satisfactory. The programme does not currently offer a diploma supplement. The application stated the relevant provisions in a very clear, comprehensive, and accessible way. This made discussion during our visit much easier, as we could focus immediately on specific points. Here too, we found the Department's responses very helpful, and our requests for clarification and further data were met promptly and fully. Subject to our remarks below about areas of improvement, we concluded that the Department's policies on all four points are fully compliant with the relevant standards.

Strengths for Bach of Law LLB .

Clear and reasonable admissions criteria, applied in a way that allows for case-by-case determinations (e.g. when a student fails to meet the 14/20 requirement because of a low score in a non-relevant subject); clear rules on progression within the LLB programme; clear communication of rules on certificate to be obtained and its recognition in Cyprus and other European countries (especially Greece).

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Bach of Law

LLB A few small points: (a) the Handbook must make clear that the language of instruction is only Greek, not 'Greek/English' as stated in the application (at p.11) (b) The section of the application on Accreditation for Prior Learning (p.15) needs to be updated to refer to the LLB degree.

Response a:

Done. We have made a clear indication to this regard at page 15 of the revised Handbook (see Annex7_Handbook_LLBA LAW NUP Annex 2).

In addition to this, we have changed all syllabi, which currently mention that the language of instruction is Greek (see Annex 6_LLBA LAW NUP Application ENG.doc).

Response b:

Done. We have implemented this recommendation and the revised wording is as follows *“Any student registered on the LLB degree who has pursued appropriate studies in this or another institution or who possesses appropriate qualifications or experience has the right to be considered for the accreditation of prior learning (APL). The credit permissible via APL shall not normally exceed 50% of the total credit of the LLB Programme (see Annex 6 _LLBA LAW NUP Application ENG.doc., chapter 5.11)*

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

Findings for Bach of Law LLB

In the material provided by the University and the Department, the committee found all the relevant information on teaching and learning resources. We also heard during our Q&A sessions that all lecturers distribute information to the students at the beginning of the course and via the Learning Management System Moodle. In each syllabus students find more detailed aims and objectives of the module, learning outcomes, syllabi, coursework details, methods of assessment for assignments and exams and extensive reading list.

The physical facilities are very good, as was confirmed by students and staff members during the panel discussions. Computer facilities and the Library are very good. Lecture rooms are well equipped, the library which is open all week and is accessible online has the relevant sources and the Department has managed to offer everything online during the Covid19 crisis. Usually there are round 20 students in a group and there is a favorable staff-student ratio. The University has a well-established structure for student support, in addition to the academic advise that students get within their programme. A special department at the central level ensures that special needs students are provided with proper advice and support.

Strengths for Bach of Law LLB .

Student support is efficiently and effectively organised at the University level. In addition, students can speak to their academic adviser and they can get administrative support within the Department

The ICT, lecture rooms and library facilities are all very good and needs are regularly assessed Information on the programme is available to prospective students, students, graduates, staff and the wider public.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Bach of Law LLB.

The committee appreciates the variety in educational methods in courses and in extracurricular activities and would in addition welcome further elaboration, also in regular courses. This wish was also expressed by the students we spoke to.

6. Additional for distance learning programmes *(ALL ESG)*

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7. Additional for doctoral programmes *(ALL ESG)*

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8. Additional for joint programmes *(ALL ESG)*

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

The Committee believes that the LLB programme is clearly compliant with the applicable standards of assessment and gladly recommends its accreditation. The documentation in the application pack was very thorough and informative, all our requests for further information were answered swiftly and fully, and our interaction with the teaching and administrative staff of the Department and the University during our remote visit was pleasant and constructive.

High quality teaching, good class size, enthusiastic and committed teachers who teach in their area of expertise, motivated students, regular events and extracurricular activities such as moot courts, guest lecture and excursions and visits create a vibrant learning environment. Research and teaching appear to strengthen each other and fruitful collaborations with wider society are in place. The networks of the academic staff and the university offer opportunities for further developments in societal and academic collaborations.

The excellent library facilities, support structures, buildings and ICT services enhance students' learning experience. The two strands (Greek and Cypriot) both seem to prepare students well for the labor market. These observations were all confirmed by students and graduates.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Pantelis Sklias	Rector	
Prof. Stelios Perrakis	Dean	

Date: 12/02/2021