

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 1.07.2024

## Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Cyprus

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

**In Greek:** Διδακτορικό στην Πολιτική Επιστήμη

**In English:** Ph.D. in Political Science

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

**In Greek:**

**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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 fact that this is a small programme entails strong relationship with the supervisor and time allocated to each student individually. There is some access to research funding and relationship with certain scholarly networks (e.g. ECPR) facilitates better access to conferences, summer schools and other academic meetings. The research staff international profile allows for good familiarization with international literature and the excellent facilities (e.g. library) allow access.</p> <p>Lack of funding in the form of scholarship means that the PhD may not be a viable option for a large number of students who cannot self-fund. We also noted the absence of a broader PhD community in the form of discussion groups, platforms for frequently presenting work and getting comments, preparing publications, conference presentations and other endeavors.</p>	<p>Many thanks for the EEC's positive assessment of the Ph.D. Program in Political Science.</p> <p>Discussion on offering more Ph.D. Scholarships is now taking place at the level of the Post-Graduate Studies Faculty (for the restart of "Evagoras" Scholarships Scheme). Our department representative there is pushing for this.</p> <p>We are thankful for your suggestion and will make use of it for arguing for the support of PhD Scholarships. Note also that PhD students are currently offered the possibility to work as paid teaching-assistants for up to 1,000E per month during the teaching period.</p> <p>Furthermore, the recently recruited academic staff of the Department has contributed to increase funding opportunities through research projects for PhD candidates. In order to create a community of doctoral students, the program has already established an annual seminar in which each student, during the writing phase, presents their research in front of the other students and the faculty of the Department. At the same time, the Department participates in the ECPR network which provides a number of opportunities for participation to PhD students.</p> <p>The Department supports PhD students with up to the amount of 500E in order to attend seminars online, or abroad.</p> <p>The Department offers one MA in Political Science, one MA in Peace, Conflict, and Democracy and is in the accreditation process of two MA programmes (Sociology and Media Studies). We are hopeful that these MA programmes will act as pathways towards a PhD and, thus, increase opportunities for collective life for PhD students.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

**2. Quality Assurance**  
(ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Overall, this is a successful doctoral program, where students have the opportunity to attend a variety of MA modules to improve their knowledge of substantive political issues. The program is run professionally with a good governance structure. As pointed out, the duration of the PhD can be discouraging for certain individuals, since no funding is available for the students.</p>	<p>Please see above (1).</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>To ensure students develop strong research skills early in their academic careers, formalize the inclusion of research methods modules in the curriculum should be a priority. Providing sufficient teaching experience could improve students' financial situation and also their prospect of employment in the academic job market.</p>	<p>This comment is well-taken.</p> <p>The Department has recently introduced an Annual Seminar focusing on professional development for PhD students in Sociology, in the first year of their writing Stage. This will be obligatory for PhD students in Political Science too.</p> <p>The breadth of research content and the diversity of dissertations require a different and specialized methodological approach for each one. In some cases, emphasis must be placed on empirical-quantitative methods, in others on empirical-qualitative methods, and in others still on a methodology of a more epistemological nature. Therefore, we prefer that the issues of methodology and the students' needs in this area be handled by the supervising professor.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

**3. Learning and Teaching**  
(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>To deepen their understanding of political science, students take a comprehensive exam covering three of the four core subfields: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. This exam is typically required by the seventh semester, but students who are well-prepared can arrange to take it earlier.</p>	<p>The Comprehensive Exam is indeed required to be taken by the seventh semester. However, PhD students can opt to take as early as the third semester of their studies.</p> <p>The four subfields are: European Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>The department could do more to promote all relevant learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, to give students the best chance to succeed in the academic and non-academic job market.</p>	<p>The Department believes that the annual PhD-student seminar (see section 1) and the annual professional-development seminar (see section 2) will have a positive effect for PhD Students are regards the academic and non-academic job market.</p> <p>Doctoral students are utilized as teaching assistants in the courses of their supervisor (especially when these courses are related to the topic of their dissertation). We also promote the active participation of students in conferences, workshops, and seminars (see section 1).</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>In addition to MA modules, students would benefit from more specialized courses tailored to the needs of research students. We recommend that students begin with method courses to establish a strong scientific foundation, followed by more substantive courses in political science. Furthermore, they should be encouraged to seek co-authoring opportunities with faculty and fellow doctoral students.</p> <p>Considering the option of a paper-based PhD thesis could enhance the likelihood of publication in academic journals. Additionally, fostering greater involvement of students in European networks is advisable for example through ECPR standing groups. Finally, they should be more informed about postdoctoral opportunities nationally and internationally.</p>	<p>The students possess the necessary background in political science, as this is taken into account during the highly competitive admission process to the program. This background is further confirmed by the comprehensive examination. As regards methodology courses, please see above (2).</p> <p>Currently both University Regulations and the Accreditation Body (CYQAA) Regulations do not allow for a paper-based PhD thesis. Both explicitly mention a Thesis. We have been informed by the Post-Graduate Studies Faculty that the PhD by publication option was discussed in the past but it was not approved. Any changes towards this direction requires a change in both University Regulations and the regulations of the Accreditation Body itself.</p> <p>At the same time, the Department believes that a monograph-style dissertation ensures a deep and comprehensive understanding of the subject of the dissertation. Still, PhD students are encouraged to present their work in conferences and publish parts of their dissertation in the form of research papers in international journals. We agree with the committee that greater emphasis could be placed on publishing or co-publishing some appropriately refined chapters of the dissertation, in academic journals.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

**7. Conclusions and final remarks**

Conclusions and final remarks <b>by EEC</b>	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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**B. Higher Education Institution academic representatives**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Professor Philemon Bantimaroudis</b>	Department Chairperson	
<b>Professor Stavros Tombazos</b>	Ph.D. in Political Science, Coordinator	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

**Date:** Click to enter date