



Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 5 July 2022

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό Ηλεκτρολόγου Μηχανικού (6
εξάμηνα/240 ECTS)

In English:

Doctor of Philosophy in Electrical Engineering (6
semester/240 ECTS)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek and English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):** None



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 300.1.1/2 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.*
- *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 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 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*
- *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, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

EEC's Comment 1:

It seems to be a communication issue regarding the awareness of the students to the latest guidelines. The mechanism of communication of the students with the administration is suggested to be improved.

HEI's response:

All the rules/regulations/guidelines regarding all programmes of study (including the PhD) are readily available to everyone via both the Department's website and the University's website. For the students' convenience, the rules and regulations regarding any programme of study at the University are succinctly and explicitly outlined in the official "Prospectus" publications (separate for undergraduate and post-graduate studies) found on the University's website:

https://newdev.ucy.ac.cy/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2022/03/Undergr.Prosp_.En20-22.pdf

https://newdev.ucy.ac.cy/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2022/03/Postgr.En_.21-23_sm.pdf

Of course, whenever there is a CHANGE in the rules and regulations, the students are immediately notified by email and the changes are also reflected in the aforementioned publications and on the website of the Graduate School. Since all graduate-level programmes of study (including the PhD) are overseen by the University's Graduate School (at the University-level), all important information regarding general PhD rules and regulations is posted on the Graduate School's website.

Nevertheless, based on this suggestion by the EEC to further help the students, we have also advised all academics to go through the main requirements of the degree during the first meeting with their PhD students and proactively ask students during their advisor-advisee meetings if they have any questions regarding the rules, guidelines and programme requirements.

EEC's Comment 2:

There are no official formal procedures for the career and promotion of the academic staff.

HEI's response:

There must have been a misunderstanding regarding this issue, because the procedures for promotion of the academic staff are formally and explicitly stated in the official rules/law of the University. There are very detailed rules and procedures regarding the promotion of the academic staff at all the ranks (from Lecturer to Assistant Professor, from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor [tenure], and from Associate Professor to Professor).

EEC's Comment 3:

The completion of the new building to house the Department and the activities of the programme will strongly enhance and improve the quality of the lectures, labs and research. Also new perspectives are offered to increase the programmes, number of students and academic staff.

HEI's response:

Indeed, the new School of Engineering building that will house the Department will strongly enhance the quality of our Department and allow us to increase the number of our offered programmes. As highlighted in the recently crafted Strategic Plan 2021-2025 of the Department (submitted to the University in June 2021), the creation of new English-language Master programmes is one of our priorities. A new Master programme in Key Enabling Technologies was approved by the Department in April 2022 and the official application documents will soon be submitted to the Graduate School of the University. Another new Master programme in Smart Grid Technologies was submitted in February 2022 for funding within the context of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD). The additional new programmes will increase both the number of students and, correspondingly, the number of academic staff. They will also expand the courses available to the PhD students, further enhancing their theoretical/experimental background. Moreover, new laboratory facilities and new equipment will enhance teaching through the development of new teaching laboratories as well as research activities through the development of additional research laboratories and testbeds.

EEC's Comment 4:

The requirements for graduating wrt. the expected number of publications and their quality/impact is unclear and is suggested to be continuously discussed with the students.

HEI's response:

Indeed, as done in the vast majority of universities around the world, we deliberately do not include a minimum number of expected publications in the official rules, because a number by itself does not capture/reflect the quality/impact of the actual publications. Thus, we leave it to the academic advisor to regularly discuss this issue with the student and take appropriate actions for the PhD student to achieve a desired level of quality in his/her publication record before graduation. Nevertheless, depending on the field of study, it is expected that the PhD students will publish their work in high-quality journals and/or international conference proceedings prior to obtaining their degree.

EEC's Comment 5:

The programme of PhD is suggested to be advertised widely.

HEI's response:

We are currently one of the departments within the University of Cyprus with the highest number of PhD students (70 in total, 48 EE and 22 CE) as well as the highest number of international PhD students. Even though the Department is very active in outreach and promotional activities, we intend to further increase our efforts in this domain. With the switch to English-taught post-graduate programmes in the Fall semester of 2023, we also intend to embark on systematic advertising through all relevant online and physical channels that reach an international audience. Moreover, we also intend to progressively increase our presence on social media channels, which tend to be very effective advertising outlets. Finally, the Faculty of Engineering is starting an effort to promote the English-language post-graduate programmes of all of its constituent Departments.

EEC's Comment 6:

Consider to switch to a fully English taught PhD programme.

HEI's response:

All the post-graduate programmes (Masters and Ph.D.) have received approval by the University Senate to be offered in English, and we will start offering them only in English from the 2023-24 Academic Year.

EEC's Comment 7:

Consider some kind of internationalisation (e.g. external research stays) to improve international visibility of UCY.

HEI's response:

The Department already sends Ph.D. students on external research stays through various EU schemes. For instance, our Ph.D. students have visited quite prestigious universities in the past through the Erasmus programme, collaborative agreements, COST Actions, and Marie Curie ITN projects. Indicative examples include Imperial College London (UK), NICT (Japan), the University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany), UCL (UK), and DTU (Denmark).

In addition to utilizing the various EU schemes to send students abroad, all academics are encouraged to send their Ph.D. students for short stays at their research collaborators' institutions in other countries. There are indeed many cases of such external stays by our Ph.D. students, especially when they are conducting research on collaborative EU/international research programs.



2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

EEC's Comment 8:

Not many areas of improvement were detected for this program. Please see section 6.

HEI's response:

Thank you for the positive comment. The Department will continue its effort to maintain and improve the quality of the PhD programme.

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

EEC's Comment 9:

The faculty members of the department need to ensure that their PhD students have better understandings about the criteria for their graduation. While it is understandable that there is a lot of uncertainties for research outcomes, PhD supervisors need to have continuous discussions with their PhD students for clearly defining and reshaping the ultimate goal of students' PhD projects.

HEI's response:

The only criterion regarding the graduation of a PhD student that is not explicitly stated in the rules of the Programme of Study is the number of publications. As mentioned in our response to EEC's Comment 4, we are in line with what is done in the vast majority of universities around the world, i.e., we deliberately do not include a minimum expected number of publications in the official rules, because a number by itself does not capture/reflect the quality/impact of the actual publications. Thus, we leave it to the academic advisor to regularly discuss this issue with the student and take appropriate actions for the PhD student to achieve a desired level of quality in his/her publication record before graduation. Nevertheless, depending on the field of study, it is expected that the PhD students will publish their work in high-quality journals and/or international conference proceedings prior to obtaining their degree.

All other criteria for graduation are clearly and explicitly stated (and readily available to everyone) via both the Department's website and the University's website, as explained in our response to EEC's Comment 1.

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

EEC's Comment 10:

With the forthcoming English DSc programme it is expected that international student recruitment becomes more viable - currently the number of applicants to the programme is not high (the programme has attracted excellent students though). Department should revisit the admission procedure to make it smooth when the number of applicants increases notably. The department faculty should also carefully consider the requirements set for the doctoral thesis (in terms of publications). Now it looks that due to heavy requirements graduation in nominal 4 year time is an exception. Supervisors should communicate to students the requirements for the thesis as clearly as possible. Supervisor could also give career planning support for DSc students. In general the communication of rules and regulations (to students) could be improved.

HEI's response:

We are currently one of the departments within the University of Cyprus with the highest number of PhD students (70 in total, 48 EE and 22 CE) as well as the highest number of international PhD students. In terms of the admission procedure for PhD students, this is handled through an automated (online) system implemented by the Graduate School of the University. The system is constantly improving, so we do not expect to have any issues with increasing numbers of PhD applications.

Regarding the requirements (in terms of publications) for graduation, the Department believes that the current expectations are not heavy and are in line with what is expected in good universities abroad (i.e., depending on the field of study, it is expected that the PhD students will publish their work in high-quality journals and/or international conference proceedings prior to obtaining their degree). Any relaxation in these requirements for the sake of decreasing the time needed to graduate would risk the reputation of both the Department and the University. Nevertheless, based on the EEC's recommendation, we have advised all academic staff to regularly/frequently discuss these expectations/requirements with the students (especially at the beginning of their PhD studies). There is also a conscious effort by all Department faculty for their PhD students to complete some of their programme requirements (i.e., courses requirement, qualifying exam, thesis proposal) as quickly as possible, so that they can shorten the length of their studies.

Regarding the issue of better communicating the rules and regulations to students, please also refer to our responses to EEC's Comments 1, 4, and 9.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

EEC's Comment 11:

The number of yearly admitted DSc students could be higher. Situation is expected to improve when the English DSc programme is introduced and international students can be admitted. Yet, the department should advertise itself to potential doctoral students (the department has excellent role models among students that can give testimonials and participate in student marketing). While the faculty is doing an excellent job in research supervision, there seems to be more need for career development support and support with requirements that students should fulfil in order to complete a doctoral degree (especially regarding required volume and quality of research). As noticed previously, a special care of international students in future may require investments in student support.

HEI's response:

We are currently one of the departments within the University of Cyprus with the highest number of PhD students (70 in total, 48 EE and 22 CE) as well as the highest number of international PhD students. As also mentioned in our response to EEC's Comment 5, the Department is very active in outreach and promotional activities, but we intend to further increase our efforts in this domain. With the switch to English-taught post-graduate programmes in the Fall semester of 2023, we also intend to embark on systematic advertising through all relevant online and physical channels that reach an international audience. Moreover, we also intend to progressively increase our presence on social media channels, which tend to be very effective advertising outlets. Finally, the Faculty of Engineering is starting an effort to promote the English-language post-graduate programmes of all of its constituent Departments. In all these promotional efforts, we will use current/past PhD students in testimonials to make the marketing more relatable to prospective applicants.

Regarding the comment about career development support, the academic advisors are tasked with discussing this issue regularly with their students during their studies, in order to steer the student toward their desired career objective.

Student support, in general, is currently handled at the University-level. The University already provides English-language support services to all incoming international students. Since internationalization is one of the key goals of the University, the student support services will continue to be expanded and enhanced to accommodate the needs of the increasing numbers of international students with diverse cultural backgrounds.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC's Comment 12:

The department needs to ensure that all the essential information about the PhD programme is publicly available and made clear to the students on the programme. If there is any change which has been made to the students' guidelines or handbooks, such changes should be informed to the students clearly and timely.

HEI's response:

As mentioned in our response to EEC's Comment 1, all the rules/regulations/guidelines regarding all programmes of study (including the PhD) are readily available to everyone via both the Department's website and the University's website. For the students' convenience, the rules and regulations regarding any programme of study at the University are succinctly and explicitly outlined in the official "Prospectus" publications (separate for undergraduate and post-graduate studies) found on the University's website:

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Of course, whenever there is a CHANGE in the rules and regulations, the students are immediately notified by email and the changes are also reflected in the aforementioned publications and on the website of the Graduate School. Since all graduate-level programmes of study (including the PhD) are overseen by the University's Graduate School (at the University-level), all important information regarding PhD rules and regulations is posted on the Graduate School's website.

Nevertheless, based on this suggestion by the EEC to further help the students, we have also advised all academics to go through the main requirements of the degree during the first meeting with their PhD students and proactively ask students during their advisor-advisee meetings if they have any questions regarding the rules, guidelines and programme requirements.

EEC's Comment 13:

The faculty members of the department need to ensure that their PhD students have better understandings about the criteria for their graduation. While it is understandable that there is a lot of uncertainties for research outcomes, PhD supervisors need to have continuous discussions with their PhD students for clearly defining and reshaping the ultimate goal of students' PhD projects.

HEI's response:

This comment is the same as EEC's Comment 9. We hereby repeat the same response:

The only criterion regarding the graduation of a PhD student that is not explicitly stated in the rules of the Programme of Study are the number of publications. As mentioned in our response to EEC's Comment 4, we are in line with what is done in the vast majority of universities around the world, i.e., we deliberately do not include a minimum expected number of publications in the



official rules, because a number by itself does not capture/reflect the quality/impact of the actual publications. Thus, we leave it to the academic advisor to regularly discuss this issue with the student and take appropriate actions for the PhD student to achieve a desired level of quality in his/her publication record before graduation. (i.e., depending on the field of study, it is expected that the PhD students will publish their work in high-quality journals and/or international conference proceedings prior to obtaining their degree).

All other criteria for graduation are clearly and explicitly stated (and readily available to everyone) via both the Department's website and the University's website, as explained in our response to EEC's Comment 1.



7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

Not applicable.



B. Conclusions and final remarks


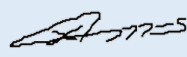
EEC's Comment 14:

The members of the EEC committee found the academic programmes to be compliant in all examined aspects. The existing course offerings provide a balance between engineering fundamentals and practice. Moreover, active learning is encouraged through lab work and other means presented by the faculty.

HEI's response:

The Department will continue its effort to maintain and improve these quality levels.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Chrysostomos Nicopoulos	Associate Professor, Chair of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering	
Charalambos A. Charalambous	Associate Professor, Vice-Chair of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering	
Georgios Ellinas	Professor, Department's Quality Assurance Evaluation Coordinator	GEllinas
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
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Date: 5 July 2022

