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ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
THE CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: July 2ⁿᵈ, 2019

Higher Education Institution's response

- **Higher education institution:**
  UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS

  Department: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

  Faculty: FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION

- **Town:** NICOSIA

- **Programme of study (Name, ECTS, duration, cycle)**

  In Greek: ΠΤΥΧΙΟ ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

  In English: PROGRAMME OF STUDIES FOR

  BACHELOR DEGREE IN EDUCATION – PRIMARY

  SCHOOL TEACHING

- **Language of instruction:** GREEK

- **Programme's status**
  New programme: NO
  Currently operating: YES

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, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

  - *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.*

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

EEC's comments

Findings
The policy for quality assurance of the programme of study has a formal status and is publicly available. It supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes. It supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities. The programme ensures academic integrity and freedom. It guards against intolerance or discrimination against the students or staff. The programme clearly supports the involvement of external stakeholders.

The programme is designed in line with the institutional strategy and has explicit intended learning outcomes. It is designed by involving students and other stakeholders and benefits from external expertise. The programme reflects the purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base).

The programme is designed so that it enables smooth student progression. It defines the expected student workload in ECTS. It includes well-structured placement opportunities in schools. The programme is subject to a formal institutional approval process.

It results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of relevant frameworks. The programme is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date. It is periodically reviewed and revised accordingly.

Public information about the programme is available.

Strengths
The programme is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research. This is supported by a well-qualified and motivated academic staff.

The programme is up-to-date and consistent with recent research findings and developments in the labour market and digitalization. The content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance. The coherence of the programme is its strength.

The drop-out rate is admirably low and graduation rate is high. There are many applicants and the reputation of the programme is such that many students put the programme as their first choice. There is an examination for employment and the employment of the students is high.

Introduction to inclusive education is compulsory for all students. There is also an option for specialisation. This is in accordance with the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. This can help to make schools more inclusive.

The way the department seeks and utilizes feedback is exemplary.

The practical training is well appreciated by the students who feel it is important for their development and competence.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
The clarity of the public information could be improved. E.g. the department information states that each course is 6 ECTS while the prospectus of the University states 5 ECTS.

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The department might review the level of detail of the assessment of each course that is publicly available.

Increasing the number of courses on inclusive education would enable future teachers to fulfil their tasks in this area.

HEI's response

We would like to thank the EEC for their positive comments on the above aspects. We would like to also thank the committee for the feedback provided on the areas that need to be improved. Specifically, we will take actions to improve our programme's webpage information and material and make any necessary corrections following the recent prospectus of the University of Cyprus. In addition, a committee for improving the webpage has already been established and IT staff is also included in this committee to support them. This will allow the publicity of sufficient information relating to our programme of study. Finally, we will take further actions to support and encourage our students to follow the specialization on inclusive education.

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

EEC's comments

Findings

The instruction supports the development of the cognitive and social competences of the students. Their individual needs are taken into account. Respect in the learner-teacher relationship is promoted and is obviously present.

The process of teaching and learning uses appropriate pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes. Supported by their instructors the students take an active role in the learning process. They particularly emphasise the importance of their experiences in the schools in combining theory and practice for their professional development.

Teaching methods, tools and material support the use of modern educational technologies. Assessment is appropriate and supports the development of the learner.

Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. E.g. in their school experience students are given feedback, which helps them to develop their methods and approaches as teachers.

Strengths

The teaching methods and learning environments are clearly innovative. New and digital technology make the teaching process more effective. The provision of the well-equipped teaching laboratories is a major asset to help integrate theory and practice in teaching and learning.

The way that practical training is organised supports the achieving of the objectives of the study programme. Student receive comprehensive feedback on their practical training.

Students are actively involved through seminar papers and projects. There is a good balance between instructed and independent work.

Considering the Bachelor level of the programme and the intended teacher qualification, the students have suitable training in research methods.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The staff team deserves full recognition for their good work.

HEI's response

We would like to thank the EEC for recognizing the work done by the staff members of our Department. The Department will continue working under the above principles and will try to continually take into account any future challenges in order to improve the quality of the teaching methods provided to students.

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3. Teaching Staff (*ESG 1.5*)

EEC's comments

Findings
There are clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff.
The qualifications of the teaching staff are impressive. They clearly ensure quality and sustainability of the programme. However, the members of the staff are over-stretched and some areas are understaffed.
There is an impressive amount of staff collaboration with external partners including practitioners, employers, policy makers, government officials, and researchers in other universities. Visiting staff are well qualified to enhance the programme.
The teaching staff regularly engage in professional training and development, as well as meetings and working groups for improving the programme.
Assessment of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity.
The staff go well beyond their contractual duties in the important societal contributions they make and give freely of their time.
The teaching and office space of the department is spread over a large area with difficult logistics. Students and staff endure a very unhelpful distribution of buildings with a lot of time and effort being lost.
The work load is clearly demanding and may not be sustainable in the long run with current staffing. Despite the high work load and the dispersed buildings, the research profile of the staff is impressive.
Strengths
A strength of the department is the highly qualified, motivated, hard working staff. Their contributions in research, instruction, and societal impact are impressive. The working atmosphere is very positive. The staff team is very active in organising international conferences.
Areas of improvement and recommendations
The number of staff should be increased to better match the requirements of the programme and to ensure its continuing quality. There are some areas of the programme in need of enhanced staffing.
Looking more broadly at the staff recruitment policy, more thought could be given to doctoral and post-doc academic staff positions open also to external applicants. This could enhance the "brain gain" and further boost the range of competences of the staff.
More recognition and credit should be given for the important societal contributions of the academic staff of the department at the university.
A priority is to bring together the teaching and office spaces of the department.
Better support at university level is needed for academic staff who are organising international conferences.

HEI's response

We highly appreciate the constructive comments of the committee and we will take into account their recommendations for increasing the number of full-time teaching staff, occupied exclusively at the department. We fully recognize the fact that some areas of our programme need to be recruited with more academics and research staff and we also need to take into account the fact that specialized trained staff is needed for organizing international and national conferences.

4. Students (*ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7*)

EEC's comments

Findings

Clear regulations regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification are in place. There are access policies, admission processes and criteria that are implemented consistently and transparently.

Detailed strategic information on students is collected and analysed.

Student selection is based on recognition of qualifications for higher education (PanCyprian examination). However, suitability for teaching is not assessed in student selection (for example through interviews of applicable candidates in addition to the examinations).

Student mobility is promoted in student selection as well as during the studies.

Students are well supported, including by administrative staff. This may partly be due to the scattered department.

Students are involved in evaluating the instruction.

Strengths

There are clear pathways for student progress across the programme.

The drop-out rate is very low.

The elective studies offer a good amount of flexibility for the students (in a bachelors programme).

The students' success in the labour market is closely monitored and very good.

The students appreciate and use the opportunities they have for mobility.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The department could consider assessing the suitability of students for teaching in student selection (for example through interviews of applicable candidates in addition to the examinations). Self-assessment and counselling could also be considered.

The students would strongly welcome a centrally located and unified department.

HEI's response

The comments of the committee are once again very fruitful. It should, however, be noted, that the selection of students is made by the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Examination Committee and thus the Department cannot develop its own mechanisms for selecting its undergraduate students as it does in the case of the postgraduate students.

5. Resources (*ESG 1.6*)

EEC's comments

Findings
Good resources for teaching and learning exist but these are definitely inadequately located across disparate university locations. This is a problem for teaching, for student support etc. The students and staff feel excluded from the main life of the university.
The adequacy of resources is monitored and there are plans for enhancing the circumstances (e.g. digitalisation). Such plans need adequate funding.
All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.
Teaching staff is involved in the management of resources for the programme.
Strengths
The supply of teaching materials and equipment, especially the teaching labs, is exemplary.
Staff and students were positive about teaching materials and classrooms, but not about the location of the facilities in different parts of the university.
Areas of improvement and recommendations
It is urgent that resources, staff, and students are co-located at the central university campus.

HEI's response

The committee has correctly identified the problem of the location of our Department and we fully recognize the fact that being located in a building far outside the main campus is creating various problems to students and teaching staff. Our plans for the near future is to move our Department's offices to the main university campus. Actually, the university campus committee, has decided to prioritize the immediate solution of the building problems of our Department.

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

N/A

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

N/A

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

N/A

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

EEC's comments

The programme is up-to-date and consistent with recent research findings and developments in the labour market and digitalization.

The drop-out rate is admirably low and graduation rate is high. The employment of the students is high.

The teaching methods and learning environments are clearly innovative. The supply of teaching materials and equipment, especially the teaching labs, is exemplary.

New and digital technology make the teaching process more effective. The provision of the well-equipped teaching laboratories is a major asset.

The way that practical training is organised supports the achieving of the objectives of the study programme.

Introduction to inclusive education is compulsory for all students. This is necessary for a modern teaching environment.

The academic staff is well-qualified and motivated.

The number of staff should be increased to better match the requirements of the programme and to ensure its continuing quality. There are some areas of the programme in need of enhanced staffing.

More recognition and credit should be given at the university for the important societal contributions of the academic staff of the department.

Better support at university level is needed for academic staff who are organising international conferences.

A priority is to bring together the teaching and office spaces of the department. The students and staff would strongly welcome a centrally located and unified department.

It is urgent that resources, staff, and students are co-located at the central university campus.

HEI's response

We would like to thank the committee for these final remarks. As identified to each evaluation section above, we will take into account the four major suggestions for improving the quality of the services provided by our Department.

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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Leonidas Kyriakides	Head of the Department of Education	

Date: July 2nd, 2019