Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 09/03/2020

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS
- **Town:** NICOSIA
- **Programme of study**
  Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

  In Greek:

  ΒΙΟΙΑΤΡΙΚΕΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΕΣ (3 εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, ΜΑΣΤΕΡ)

  In English:

  BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES (3 semesters, 90 ECTS, M.Sc.)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **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].

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, without changing the format of the report:*

    - *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.*

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

We are very gratified with the overall strongly positive evaluation and high scores in the individual benchmarks. We will address below the few aspects that the Evaluation Committee identifies as less strong points, awarding lower scores in this section.

Comments on "Numerical Scores"

(1.3.3) Practical Training (rated with 3 out of 5)

As the Evaluation Committee points out, the students attending this M.Sc. course could benefit by extra practical courses earlier in their studies and before performing their thesis. We would like to emphasise that the students attending this M.Sc. course have the opportunity to perform cutting-edge research during their theses in research laboratories of the Department and, thus, spend at least one semester in the lab performing experiments. It is also common for M.Sc. students in Biomedical Sciences to enter their lab of choice earlier, to familiarize themselves with the research environment and practice specific techniques before the formal start date of their theses. In practice, most students spend approximately a year in the laboratory. Further, the quality of the laboratory training our students receive is also underscored by the fact that some of them contribute as authors in research publications or continue their studies towards acquiring a Ph.D. in the Department or abroad.

Although the programme does not include specific practical courses, we would like to bring to the Evaluation Committee's attention that the students attending some taught courses are invited to have laboratory visits and/or lab practicals during the semester. For example, a lab practical in the context of BIO869 Current topics in *Drosophila* Biology allows students to observe the different developmental stages of the model organism, to see example dissections of larval and adult tissues (and even practice dissections) and to assess dissected wild-type and tumor-bearing stained samples under the fluorescent microscope. Also, a lab practical during the course BIO768 Genes, Microbes and Environment in Intestinal Health introduces microbiological techniques and the students have the opportunity to learn how to perform colony PCR and assess intestinal microbial complexity by rDNA sequencing.

(1.3.5) Students' participation (rated with 3 out of 5)

The students participate in improving their programme by providing feedback anonymously for each course they have attended via University-designed questionnaires at the end of the semester. As discussed with the Evaluation Committee, the student feedback from these forms is utilised as a tool by the Faculty members to improve their courses. In addition, individual Faculty members request student feedback via informal discussion during the courses taught and shape their future teaching to accommodate reasonable student requests, accordingly. Furthermore, elected representatives of the graduate student community formally participate in the Departmental Council with voting rights. Thus, they have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of academic affairs, including the development of the graduate curriculum.

(1.8.5) Equipment (rated with 3 out of 5)

The Evaluation Committee correctly identifies these challenges: laboratory infrastructure does get old quickly in the context of rapidly evolving technology, and equipment needs are increased while our Department has been in a rapid expansion phase in the last decade. Notably, while initially the University did provide enough funding to safeguard service contracts for major equipment (for example Microscopes), severe budgetary restrictions, following the collapse and near bankruptcy of the country's economy in 2013, have not allowed us to maintain them to date. We are very aware of these problems and have been proactive in seeking out University funding to both cover equipment needs and also properly maintain them. This is a constant struggle to which we are committed but which is, to a large extent, beyond our immediate control and lies with University central administration and, inevitably state funding of public Universities.

Some recent positive developments that we would like to highlight for the Evaluation Committee are the following:

(a) the acquisition, in late 2019, of a substantial supplementary budget (over and above the awarded 2019 budget), earmarked for laboratory equipment, amounting to 240,000 Euro. With these funds, the Department has now acquired major new pieces of equipment including a Tapestation, an additional real-time PCR station, a ChemiDoc imaging system for chemilluminescence and fluorescence applications, additional BL2 cell culture hoods, a UV/visible spectrophotometer, a microscope stage incubator for live cell imaging, -80^{o} C refrigerators, and several protein and nucleic acid electrophoresis systems.

(b) the acquisition, in late 2019, of supplementary budget earmarked for maintenance of laboratory equipment, amounting to 30,000 Euro.

(c) the acquisition and installation in late 2019, through external research funding, of a BioRad S3e cell sorter, the first fluorescence-activated cell sorter in the department, which will enable numerous cell biology applications.

(d) the forthcoming installation in 2020, through external research funding, of a *Zeiss LSM900 with Airyscan 2* confocal microscope, the first super resolution system to be acquired in Cyprus (140nm resolution), which, together with diverse microscope infrastructure already available, makes the Department the most advanced center for biological imaging on the island.

We believe that these developments go a long way in addressing the challenges described and we commit that, on our part, we will keep working on the issue of constantly upgrading and maintaining research infrastructure to the benefit of our students and our Department's research output.

(1.8.6) The balance between theory and practice (rated with 3 out of 5)

Please refer to our response to point 1.3.3 (p.3, **Practical training**)

(1.21) Collaborations with other institutions and within the University (rated with 2 out of 5)

We agree with the view that joining forces with entities that are scientifically relevant within the University maximises research efficiency and output and helps economies to scale. The Medical School and the Department of Chemistry were indicated by the Evaluation Committee as such potential partners. It goes without saying however that for collaborations to be established, mutual desire from potential partners should be the prerequisite driving force. We would like to bring to the attention of the Evaluation Committee that the Medical School, as a new and still under development School, does not have a graduate programme as yet and, thus, research activity is currently modest. The graduate Programmes of the Chemistry Department are very typical core Chemistry Programmes (no Biochemistry or other fields at the interface with Biology) and, correspondingly, so are the specialisations of Faculty, making the prospect of collaboration not readily obvious. Nevertheless, our Department is very positive and open to collaborations and has actually been involved in such collaborations at different levels with both the Medical School and the Department of Chemistry, as follows:

(a) There are currently research collaborations and joint funded research programmes between our Department and either the Medical School or the Department of Chemistry, involving graduate students in our Department. Specifically, collaborative research with the Chemistry Department focuses on the synthesis of caged photoactivatable kinase inhibitors and synthesis and evaluation of biocompatible polymers for mechanobiological applications, while the molecular and genetic analysis of patients with primary ciliary dyskinesia is the subject of research collaboration with the Medical School.

(b) Our Department was offering Biology courses (Molecular Cell Biology) to Medicine students for a number of years and it was granted for this purpose a *Special Scientist* position with the task of teaching service courses to Medical School undergraduates. The Medical School requested to take control of all service courses offered by other Departments (including Biology, Chemistry and others), citing the different modular format of their curriculum. As a result, the Special Scientist position was eventually transferred to the Medical School by the University administration, without consultation with our part.

(c) Faculty Members of the Department have participated in hiring committees for the recruitment of Medical School Faculty on several occasions.

Furthermore, we would like to bring to the Evaluation committee's attention that Faculty members from our Department are engaging in collaborative projects with Departments other than Chemistry within the School of Pure and Applied Sciences (specifically, the Departments of Physics and Computer Science), as well as with the School of Engineering. Collaborative projects with other Cypriot academic institutions, such as the Technical University of Cyprus and the European University of Cyprus, are also ongoing.

Thus, although there is always scope for a wider collaboration, on the basis of the above, and given that collaboration is built on the principle of reciprocity and is, therefore, not only in our control, we believe that substantial collaborations are already in place.

Comments on "Further information"

(1) Employability Records

The University of Cyprus is currently utilizing a database and an online platform that allow the collection of alumni information through its University Development and Alumni Relations Office.

The comprehensive database allows alumni to access their personal information and update their data, regarding academic, professional and personal status. After graduation, alumni are asked periodically to update their personal data either online

(www.ucy.ac.cy/alumni) or by completing a questionnaire or even by phone. Upon completing the questionnaire, alumni are given the choice to apply for a membership card which gives them access to some internal and external benefits and discounts, i.e. the Benefits Package (e.g. Library access, foreign language courses, hotel and restaurant discounts, etc.). Due to the benefits Package, there is an extra initial incentive for recent graduates to register and complete the questionnaire upon graduation.

A networking tool is also used by the University Development and Alumni Relations Office, called the "UCY Alumni Community" (www.ucyalumni.com) in which alumni, senior students and university staff (academic and administrative) may sign in and interact with each other, be informed about University activities, jobs, events, create Pages, participate in the mentoring program, etc. The UCY Alumni Community platform, allows University Departments to create their own alumni Pages within this system offering subject-specific news and announcements. Alumni data are also be obtained via this platform, since alumni log in via their LinkedIn/Facebook profile or their email and thus the data base is updated periodically by the staff of the University Development and Alumni Relations Office.

Comments on "Strengths"

We are delighted with the positive comments by the Evaluation Committee.

Comments on "Weaknesses"

-Lab space/Building situation

We could not agree more with the comments of the Evaluation Committee on the critical shortage of space that the Department currently faces and the disconcerting delay (of over one decade) in the realisation of the custom-made Departmental Building. The Department will continue prioritising the Building issue with University authorities, which have given assurances for the commencement of building work in 2020. This pledge was repeated in front of the Evaluation Committee by the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs during the site visit.

In the meantime, the Department has actively campaigned for additional interim space allocation to cover the most pressing needs in laboratory and office space. In a recent development, the Vice Rector for International Affairs, Finance and Administration, has pledged to the Department the allocation of additional space, specifically two rooms totalling 100m^2, suitable for both laboratory and office needs. Furthermore, to maximise efficiency, the Department has decided the remodelling and re-organisation of existing space. Together, extra space allocation and internal re-organisation will alleviate, to some extent, the most pressing and immediate needs.

-Collaborations

The issue has already been addressed in an earlier section (p.4, under **Collaborations with other institutions and within the University**).

-Materials in English

It is not clear what this comment refers to, or whether it concerns M.Sc. students originally registered before 2018. The M.Sc. Programme in Biomedical Sciences has adopted the English as the exclusive working language in 2018 and, since then, English is uniquely the language of instruction and systematically used in all forms of communication within the program. Additionally, we are currently in the process of translating in English the entirety of departmental rules and regulations pertaining to graduate examinations and this will be available by the next academic semester. The Department will continue to operate exclusively in English in all its graduate Programmes.

-Backup administrative personnel

It is true that there is no backup system for temporary absence of administrative personnel at the Department and this is the norm across the University. Following a period of many changes in administrative personnel affiliated to the Department, the current situation seems stable, the duties of each person are clear and well-defined and administrators have become experienced and efficient in their duties. Operational pressures do still arise from prolonged absence due to personal circumstances, but there is no flexibility in the administrative system for short-term replacements. The Department has utilised part-time paid student employment to alleviate pressures, as necessary.

Other Information

The Department has revised the program of study to include one additional compulsory course on laboratory health and safety with 0 ECTs. A course description and a revised Table 2 are provided in **Appendix I**.

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

Again, we are very satisfied with the appreciation of our efforts and high scores by the Evaluation Committee. We will address below the two aspects that the Evaluation Committee identifies as less strong points and some recommendations that the Evaluation Committee included under the section "Weaknesses".

Comments on "Numerical Scores"

(2.7) Educational activities which encourage students' active participation in the learning process are implemented (rated with 3 out of 5)

We could not agree more with the Evaluation Committee's suggestion for the inclusion of modern teaching methods that encourage active student participation and effective learning. Nevertheless, we would like to point out that in most taught graduate courses, the instructors utilise a variety of teaching methods that include learner-centered instruction, e.g. oral presentations and posters on current research topics that students prepare individually or in groups followed by Q&A sessions and brainstorming, research review preparation in groups that encourages cooperation and researching the literature followed by discussion and feedback, case study presentation in the classroom to explore complex issues and apply critical thinking, and laboratory practicals that promote hands-on experience.

We appreciate that the Evaluation Committee acknowledges the efforts of the Faculty to utilise diverse and modern teaching methodologies. Although each member of the Faculty is the sole designer of his/her course, the Graduate Committee will send a circular to all Faculty highlighting student-centered learning methods, such as class-flipping, as desirable options for teaching.

(2.8) Teaching incorporates the use of modern educational technologies that are consistent with international standards, including a platform for the electronic support of learning (rated with 3 out of 5)

The e-Class (Blackboard) system is available via the University. The instructors use this platform to circulate lecture slides, notes, presentations, videos and reading material to the class, and thus all course material is immediately available to the students. In addition, instructor-student communication and grading tools are available through the system. The Blackboard system is utilised by almost all Faculty of the department, because it greatly facilitates teaching and learning. The Graduate committee of the Department will encourage any faculty members that do not currently use the Blackboard system to do so. New users can quickly learn to effectively navigate the system by attending seminars offered every semester by the University.

Comments on "Areas of Improvement"

-Communication/meeting with students

As explained, Faculty members are constantly available to their M.Sc. students both in the lab (daily consultation is the norm) and at courses, without the need for appointment ("open door" policy). However, following the Committee's request, formal Office Hours per Faculty/Course will be introduced in addition to our "open door" policy.

-Plurality of Course Assessment Methodologies

Plurality of assessment methods is compulsory in all taught Courses, as stipulated in the Postgraduate Studies Rules: each Member of Faculty is obligated to assess student performance in at least two different ways. Faculty has sole authority to decide upon the methods of assessment, e.g. written examination, oral presentation, written assignment.

-Teaching Methodologies

Please refer to our detailed response earlier on this page (p.7, 2.7 **Educational activities … are implemented**)

-E-class (Blackboard) system

Please refer to our detailed response earlier on this page (p.7, 2.8 **Teaching incorporates… electronic support of learning**).

-More than one examiner per course

We would like to highlight the fact that current courses, which do not conform to a "taught class" format, are examined by multi-member committees. For the M.Sc. in Biomedical Sciences, the examination of the research thesis is examined by a three-member committee.

For other taught courses, although we recognise that this is a valuable recommendation, it is one practically difficult to implement if courses are under a single tutor, who is solely responsible for organising and marking exams. But even in these cases, we would like to bring to the attention of the Evaluation Committee that students have the right to launch a "redress process" for their exams, which involves the independent re-marking of their disputed exam paper by a different Member of Faculty.

-Course on molecular biology and analytical techniques, and on systems approaches

We would like to stress that during various taught courses and via the seminar series, the M.Sc. students of this program are learning in the classroom the theory about the different methodologies used in the lab (molecular biology and systems approaches). Also, some courses include laboratory practicals that allow students to acquire hands-on experience on specific techniques. In addition, the Biomedical Sciences M.Sc. includes a relatively intense laboratory component, that enhances the students' laboratory skills. We do acknowledge that a course on such approaches would be useful to our students and, thus, we will take the Evaluation Committee's recommendation into account when hiring new faculty.

Please also refer to our response to point 1.3.3 (p.3, **Practical training**)

Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

We are grateful for the high scores that the Evaluation Committee credited to individual criteria in this section.

The Evaluation Committee makes the recommendation for hiring additional full-time teaching staff to alleviate the teaching load of Faculty Members. We certainly concur, while we would like to raise two points:

(a) Teaching staff positions are granted by central administration to Departments year by year on the basis of submission of applications/justifications of specific teaching needs by each Department. The positions are not guaranteed and final allocation of positions may differ significantly to what Departments request. This impedes long-term and rational planning and may compromise attraction of high-caliber visiting Faculty from abroad. It also restricts, to the minimum required, the number of tenure-track teaching Staff (of which the Department currently has two).

(b) Teaching load of Members of Faculty is set and identical across ranks and Departments. Teaching relief is only admissible in certain strictly-defined circumstances that are not widely applicable.

In this framework, the Department remains committed to continue its efforts to secure teaching posts (both temporary and tenure-track) from University authorities.

Comments on "Numerical Scores"

(3.3) The program attracts visiting professors of recognized academic standing (rated with 3 out of 5)

Our department is utilising the Erasmus+ Staff Mobility for Teaching scheme to attract visiting academics to teach our students for approximately one week. This method enriches the teaching experience of our students in various courses. In addition, our M.Sc. students have the opportunity to attend seminars presented by invited speakers during a seminar series scheme that is partially covered by University funding.

(3.11) The teaching staff is provided with adequate training opportunities in teaching methods, adult education and new technologies (rated with 3 out of 5)

The University Center of Teaching and Learning organises regular training seminars for teaching staff. These seminars are designed to engage teachers to new approaches in teaching and are usually taught by international experts.

Comments on "Areas of Improvement"

(a) Novel didactic methods

The issue has already been addressed in the previous section (p.7, 2.7 **Educational activities … are implemented**).

(b) Exam questions

Some Members of Faculty do provide past exam questions as training material in their courses. However, taking up the Evaluation Committee's recommendation, we will establish an on-line *"Exam Bank"* for students, which will be accessible through the Departmental website with users' credentials, and which will contain at least one past exam exemplar per taught course.

3. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

We are appreciative of the positive comments and high evaluation scores in this section. Below we will address specific comments and recommendations by the Evaluation Committee.

Comments on Numerical Scores

(4.4) Students' participation in exchange programmes is compared favourably to similar programmes across Europe (rated with 3 out of 5)

Our M.Sc. students utilise the Erasmus+ mobility programme to spend time abroad during their graduate studies. Via the Erasmus+, our students may attend courses relevant to their studies for one semester at a host university or they may participate in internships to acquire research experience. Until now, two and four M.Sc. students have benefited from the Erasmus+ mobility to attend courses and perform internships abroad, respectively.

Comments on "Areas of Improvement"

-Feedback on student evaluation

We appreciate this recommendation and we intend to introduce a feedback mechanism to student course evaluations by Faculty in electronic format via the Blackboard or Banner Portals or other electronic means.

-Housing Service

This is beyond our power as it is in the remit of Student Welfare administration and we will transmit this recommendation accordingly. We would like to remark that, although a housing service, as known for instance in UK Universities, is not in place at our University, Student Welfare does provide a platform for private rental property owners to advertise their availabilities to UCY students.

-Soft Skills

The Evaluation Committee rightly points out the benefit of training in "Soft Skills" for our M.Sc. students. We agree and thus incorporate such aspects in their training:

(a) All M.Sc. students are required to attend mandatory lectures on how to write a scientific paper and how to prepare a scientific poster.

(b) Presentation skills are practised through participation in scientific conferences, the yearly Departmental *Retreat*, which offers a more relaxed venue for student presentations, and courses that require oral presentations of scientific papers.

(c) Further opportunities for training in soft skills are provided by the Career Development Office of the University of Cyprus, through training seminars and workshops such as CV writing, Interview Techniques, Presentation Skills, Networking Techniques, Time Management, Problem Solving, Network Techniques and Public Speaking. Unfortunately, the Career Office does not promote or announce these activities in English, therefore, these events are not readily available to our students who do not speak Greek. We are currently negotiating with the Career Office to provide some of these seminars in English, given that a sufficient number of students is attending.

-Communication in English

We agree that it is imperative to make sure that all communication, course materials and other resources are provided to our M.Sc. students in English and we will make all efforts to address any pending inconsistency. (See also the response on p.5, under **Materials in English**).

-Licenses for software

The Department holds a license for important image processing software packages that are installed in Research Laboratories' common computer facilities, accessible for use by Ph.D. students. These include the state-of-the-art *Imaris* software (Bitplane AG, v 9.2.1), the *Adobe Suite* (Photoshop, Illustrator and other), the freeware ImageJ (enhanced with custom-built modules from the EMBL, Heidelberg) and *Zeiss* microscope software which are installed on additional terminals for image processing outside microscopy. Statistical analysis packages are also available to students including opensource *R* and licensed *SPSS*. In addition, there exists a campus-wide subscription to the BioCyc metabolic pathway database.

The Department makes concerted efforts to provide software tools to students, but cannot provide licenses to individual student users, which are now days becoming unnecessary as pertinent software becomes increasingly available at no cost.

-Collaborations with other University Departments

We have addressed the issue of collaboration with other Departments on p.4 (under **Collaborations with other institutions and within the University**).

4. Resources
(ESG 1.6)

The evaluation overall is extremely positive and we are encouraged. Certain issues, that were already highlighted in previous sections, are indicated by the Evaluation Committee and will be addressed below.

Comments on "Numerical Scores"

Concerns about space availability, research equipment and its maintenance and support staff are brought up by the evaluation Committee. The Department shares these concerns unequivocally and has repeatedly taken up these issues with University administration. Although problems remain unresolved, we would like to summarise our response, as follows:

(5.4) The laboratories adequately support the programme (rated with 3 out of 5)

Please refer to our analytical response on p.5 (under **Lab space/Building situation**).

(5.9) The equipment used in teaching and learning are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate (rated with 3 out of 5)

Please refer to our analytical response on p.3 (under **Equipment**).

In addition, we agree with the recommendation of the Evaluation Committee for additional support personnel and we plan to request an additional laboratory technician position. The laboratory technician would be required for running and maintaining major research equipment, helping to train users, including M.Sc. students, and helping Faculty in the long-term design and implementation of research using advanced core facilities.

Comments on "Areas of Improvement"

(a) Use of English Language

Please refer to our analytical response on p.5, under **Materials in English**.

(b) Biology Building

We are disappointed by what amounts to an enormous delay of the purpose-built facilities for our Department and refer to our analytical response on the subject on p.5 (under **Lab space/Building situation**).

5. Additional for distance learning programmes
(ALL ESG)

Not applicable

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

Not applicable

7. Additional for joint programmes
(ALL ESG)

Not applicable

B. Conclusions and final remarks

(1) First, we would like to, once more, thank the Evaluation Committee for the time and effort invested and the thorough recommendations offered to the Department through the Evaluation exercise. We were very encouraged by the positive and warm comments and high scores provided and satisfied to see that the Evaluation Committee identified and highlighted the same issues as those we consider, ourselves, as priorities for the future of the Department. These are the same concerns that the Department has taken up with the University administration (primarily the lack of space and a more-than-a-decade delay in the construction of the Biology Building).

As a Department, we strive to provide our students with the highest quality academic training possible, given the limitations outlined by the Evaluation Committee. Since its establishment in 2002, the growth and development of the Department of Biological Sciences have been remarkable. The Department now boasts a broad range of research areas, the highest concentration of state-of-the-art research infrastructure and corresponding scientific expertise and the largest selection of academic programs in the biological sciences in Cyprus. Qualitative indicators, such as competitive external research funding, high-impact publications, and international collaborations, attest to the continuous and diligent efforts of the Faculty to produce and disseminate knowledge, based on good international practices of research and scholarship.

This exponential academic growth of the Department, however, was not matched by a corresponding expansion in building infrastructure. Laboratory, office and common space is restrictive and prohibits the employment of additional Faculty, Teaching and Research personnel, and support personnel. The considerable delays in the construction of the new building impose hurdles in the growth and development of the Department and, by extension, in further development of our programmes of study. The current unofficial estimate for the completion of the new building stands at more than four years from now, without that deadline being solidified since construction has not yet started. As of November 2019, additional space (100 m^2), to accommodate the most pressing needs of our Department, has been pledged and remains to materialise, but this is only an emergency measure.

The University of Cyprus administration needs to resolve this problem with renewed determination, speed and ingenuity than those displayed so far to safeguard the quality and sustained good performance of the Department in the long term.

(2) Second, we would like to kindly submit a suggestion to ΔΙΠΑΕ/CYQAA.

With the experience of having undergone a total of 4 evaluations by CYQAA, we can say that the Evaluation Committees are very efficient in identifying the core important issues that need to be discussed and improved. These, like the Biology Building issue, but even smaller or procedural issues, are issues that have already been prioritized by us but are, to a large extent, beyond our direct power to resolve by ourselves because they are responsibilities of the University Leadership and/or administration. It is extremely important for the Evaluation Committees to highlight those issues and this serves as a tool for us to continue our efforts/dialogue with the Leadership/Administration but, eventually, we cannot credibly commit to specific action on those points that is measurable and can be re-visited. It would be more suitable for those recommendations to be directly addressed to the University Leadership (Rectorial Council: Rector and 2 Vice Rectors).

We therefore suggest that the Evaluation report is composed of two parts:

(a) one addressed to the Department, pertaining to scientific, teaching, research and internal procedures, and generally matters that can be directly resolved by the Department itself, and

(b) another part, addressed to the University Leadership, pertaining to matters, such as buildings, infrastructure, University Law and Rules, general procedures, new positions, that can only be handled at that level.

In this manner, each entity (Department or the University administration) can be held accountable to whatever change needs to be implemented to resolve issues (and eventually be re-evaluated).

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	*Position*	*Signature*
Assoc. Prof. Pantelis Georgiades	**Department Chairperson** *Member of the Internal Evaluation Committee of the Department*	
Prof. Niovi Santama	**Postgraduate Studies Committee of the Department** – *Coordinator* *Member of the Internal Evaluation Committee of the Department*	
Assist. Prof. Anna Papadopoulou	**Postgraduate Studies Committee of the Department** *Member*	
Assist. Prof. Chrysoula Pitsouli	**Postgraduate Studies Committee of the Department** *Member*	
Dr. Dora C. Stylianou	**University Officer of the Department** *Member of the Internal Evaluation Committee of the Department*	

Date: 09/03/2020

APPENDIX I

REVISED TABLE AND

NEW COMPULSORY COURSE

M.Sc. in Biomedical Sciences

Department of Biological Sciences

University of Cyprus

NEW COMPULSORY COURSE AND REVISED TABLE 2

We have included in Table 2 the new mandatory course BIO 605 Basic Laboratory Health and Safety Training (0 ECTS) which we mentioned to the Evaluation Committee during the site visit, and which has recently been approved by the central University authorities. The course description is provided below Table 2.

M.Sc. IN BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

TABLE 2: COURSE DISTRIBUTION PER SEMESTER

The Master's in Biomedical Sciences involves a laboratory-based research dissertation. To obtain this degree, candidates must successfully complete course BIO 605 Basic Laboratory Health and Safety Training (0 ECTS), 60 ECTS in departmental elective courses, as well as the compulsory course BIO 805 Search and Management of Bibliographic Sources (0 ECTS) and the compulsory research-based dissertation (BIO 830 Master's Research Dissertation in Biomedical Sciences, 30 ECTS). Students must also sign up for seminar courses (BIO 800 and 801 Postgraduate Seminars I and II, 0 ECTS) in two separate semesters. Students who do not complete their thesis project in one semester must sign up for course BIO 600 Continuation of Master's Research Dissertation in Biomedical Sciences in the following semester(s).

Students have the option of taking on a different course load per semester, therefore, the course distribution per semester as listed below is indicative.

A/A	Course Type	Course Name	Course Code	Periods per week	Period duration (hour)	Number of weeks/ Academic semester	Total periods/ Academic semester	Number of ECTS
A' Semester								
1.	Elective (Specialization)	Restricted Elective Course	Selected by the students from a specific list of courses offered by the Department	3	• 1.5 • 1.5 • 1	13	52	10
2.	Elective (Specialization)	Restricted Elective Course	Selected by the students from a specific list of courses offered	3	• 1.5 • 1.5 • 1	13	52	10

			by the Department					
3.	Elective (Specialization)	Restricted Elective Course	Selected by the students from a specific list of courses offered by the Department	3	• 1.5 • 1.5 • 1	13	52	10
4.	Compulsory	Basic Laboratory Health and Safety Training	BIO 605	1	• 2	2	4	0
5.	Compulsory	Postgraduate Seminars I	BIO 800	1	• 1	11	11	0
B' Semester								
6.	Elective (Specialization)	Restricted Elective Course	Selected by the students from a specific list of courses offered by the Department	3	• 1.5 • 1.5 • 1	14	56	10
7.	Elective (Specialization)	Restricted Elective Course	Selected by the students from a specific list of courses offered by the Department	3	• 1.5 • 1.5 • 1	14	56	10
8.	Elective (Specialization)	Restricted Elective Course	Selected by the students from a specific list of courses offered	3	• 1.5 • 1.5 • 1.5	14	56	10

			by the Department					
9.	Compulsory	Postgraduate Seminars II	BIO 801	1	• 1	12	12	0
10.	Compulsory	Search and Management of Bibliographic Sources	BIO 805	3	• 2 • 2	Once/semester	Once/semester	0
C' Semester								
11.	Graduate Assignment	Master's Research Dissertation in Biomedical Sciences	BIO 830	3	• 1.5 • 1.5 • 1	13	52	30

NEW DEPARTMENTAL COURSE

Course Title	**Basic Laboratory Health and Safety Training**				
Course Code	BIO 605				
Course Type	Compulsory (Specialization)				
Level	Postgraduate (Master and *Ph.D.*)				
Year / Semester	First year of study				
Instructor's Name	Dr. Dora C. Stylianou, University Officer of the Department of Biological Sciences in collaboration with the Office of Health and Safety under the supervision of the Chairperson of the Department.				
ECTS	0	Lectures / week	4 hours/semester	Laboratories / week	0
Course Purpose and Objectives	This seminar course provides students with a basic knowledge on health and safety, including fire safety, in biological laboratories. Student assessment will be "Pass / Fail". *Enrollment in the course is mandatory within the first year of study for all the postgraduate programs of study of the Department. Successful completion of the course is a prerequisite for enrollment in courses that entail personalized laboratory exercises or field exercises such as BIO 868 Fieldwork and for Master's and Ph.D. laboratory-based or field-based research dissertations.*				
Learning Outcomes	To provide students with the basic training in laboratory safety				
Prerequisites	See "Course Content" below	Required			
Course Content	• Basic Laboratory Safety Regulations • Basic Fire Safety				
Teaching Methodology	Lectures				
Bibliography	-				
Assessment	The course is graded by "Pass" or "Fail" based on attendance				
Language	English				