Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 15.5.2023

Higher Education Institution's Response

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

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

  In Greek:

  ΜΕΤΑΠΤΥΧΙΑΚΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΤΙΚΗ ΤΕΧΝΟΛΟΓΙΑ

  In English:

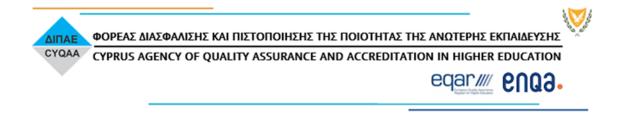 MASTER IN INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY (3-8

  SEMESTERS/90 ECTS, MASTER)

- **Language(s) of instruction: GREEK AND ENGLISH**

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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 2nd 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
Consider being more flexible than the current "one size fits all" approach of curriculum design (with all courses of the same size), and more flexible about maximum student numbers allowed in the courses (1.2).	The curriculum design is decided by the departmental board of the Department of Education. All education graduate programs follow the same format/design i.e., same ECTS per course. Changing the design of the program (increase or decrease the number of ECTS per course) will cause a number of problems to the rest of the programs because students from other education graduate programs take instructional technology courses and in the case of a different ECTS system students may not be able to complete in time the amount of ECTS required to graduate. Deciding on a different curriculum design is something that needs to be decided by the Department and not by one single program. However, a departmental committee (I am a member of this committee) has been formed to examine this issue carefully. In regards to the maximum student numbers, now that the program will have an independent status (and will no longer be part of the general master's pedagogical program, which imposed certain restrictions), will be more flexible in terms of the number of students allowed to enter the program and the courses.	Choose level of compliance:
The current study guide information about courses does not do justice to the interactive and practical approach followed in practice (which is a strong suit), so public information can be improved on this aspect. (1.3)	A main concern that the Coordinator of the program had about the description of the courses in the study guide was the fact that the application materials (including all information about the courses) was already four years old at the time of the program evaluation (site visit), and outdated in terms of what was really happening in the courses. But this is already addressed since the coordinator of the	Choose level of compliance:

	program submitted to the EEC new descriptions of the courses some days before the evaluation visit. In some cases, the titles of the courses changed. These updated materials have been uploaded to the DIPAE's server, so DIPAE can easily check this. It seems that the EEC did not have the time to examine the new descriptions since they wrote in their report that the course descriptions were four years old. In addition, the Department of Education has already submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School at UCY the new titles and new descriptions of the courses and upon approval all new descriptions will appear on the public website of the UCY. The new descriptions clearly address the interactive and practical approach followed in the teaching of the courses.	
International recruitment of academic staff would also bring new expertise. (Is there any analysis of how attractive the Department could be for international scholars, if Greek was not an absolute necessity?)

Why are there no parallel programs in English? | There is currently not an analysis of how attractive the Department could be for international scholars. But due to the high international rankings that our Department of Education has been receiving, this gives us some indication that international scholars will find our department attractive.

Greek is not an absolute necessity for the program. The program can be taught in English if English speaking students apply for the program. Currently, the Department of Education is developing a distance education master's program. Instructional Technology is part of this distance education program. The goal here is to recruit international students/scholars and to offer the instructional technology program in parallel both in Greek and English. | Choose level of compliance: |
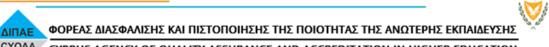| As it is, the teaching staff of the program is adequate for the small number of students. This in turn make it vulnerable to changes in personnel. The students clearly expressed the need for a second | As I explained to the EEC, this is an issue that the University has to decide, and not the program. It is not so easy and simple to hire new professors at UCY. This is centrally decided and it depends on how much money the | Choose level of compliance: |

professor on the topic of instructional technology.	Government of Cyprus allocates to UCY for hiring new academic staff.	
What has been done to find out what the students at the beginning of their studies actually know and are capable of learning?	As it was stated to the EEC, prospective students go through an interview process. During the interview process they are asked a number of questions that are relevant to their success in the program. In addition, they need to submit a transcript from previous programs of study and thus it is very easy to check for prerequisites such as for example computing skills. Moreover, they need to show evidence of good English skills and must take an English competency test. If the student does not have the necessary entry skills then he or she is rejected. The program so far has a zero-dropout rate thus this is a strong indication that all students admitted in the program are appropriately selected.	Choose level of compliance:
How is the field levelled for students in the beginning of their studies? I.e. what is done to ensure that the students have the skills and knowledge to cope with the program?	All courses include projects and it is explicitly mentioned in the new syllabi that formative assessment takes place in the form of a number of progress reports throughout the semester. This is done to ensure that students are on the right track and allows the instructor to diagnose and handle learning difficulties effectively on time. Also, due to the small number of students, there is time to supervise each student individually and support their learning so they succeed in the program.	Choose level of compliance:
Is there an in-depth analysis of what a Master from the program needs to know, is this firmly linked to an analysis of employability?	Yes, the design of the program is based on what an instructional technology graduate must know to work as an instructional technologist specialist. Thus, all course work is directed toward this aim. It is also worth mentioning that the program prepares students to work in demanding workplaces where specialized skills (design thinking, computer science skills, computational thinking skills, technology-enhanced pedagogical reasoning skills, etc.) are	Choose level of compliance:

	required. The course work in the program is highly challenging but the strong ongoing support from the faculty ensures students' success in the program (apprenticeship model).	
Is there an analysis of how much work goes into each course? Is the workload (and the cognitive level of the content) realistic given the starting skills and knowledge of the students? The answer given by the students was positive.	As the EEC stated, the students answered this question and stated that the workload is realistic given their starting skills and knowledge. There is of course a preliminary analysis of how much work goes into each course and that is how the assessment criteria are decided. In addition, as the teaching of the courses is very student-centered, reflection in action and on action during the semester as well as ongoing discussions with the students about the demands of the courses provides feedback to the faculty, and if needed, changes are made to better satisfy the needs of the students.	Choose level of compliance:
Is the 12 ECTS modular structure of the curriculum optimal, i.e. does every type and level of content need an equal time frame? The EEC has not found this to be the case. Naturally it makes planning technically easier – but should this be the main concern? Is it be easy at the cost of the quality of instruction of the program as a whole?	The 12 ECTS modular structure of the curriculum is decided by the Faculty Board of the Department of Education and each program has to follow it. This is the current situation. However, currently the Department decided to examine how to offer its courses in more flexible ways for various lengths of time. I am a member of this committee and we are looking into ways of how some courses can be implemented in different time frames (i.e., some course will have a 2-week duration, some others a four-week duration and so on). Once, we manage to do this, then I believe we will be able to discuss the 12-ECTS modular structure and how we can change it.	Choose level of compliance:
The minimum years of study is 1,5 years. Why is this? Many internationally attractive Master's programs aim at one year. Should there be a follow-up on the plans to have the programs in English, some thought needs to be on how this affects potential applicants and selection pressure.	This is because UCY allows a student to register for a maximum of 30 ECTS per semester. Since our graduate programs are 90 ECTS, a student needs a minimum of three semesters to graduate.	Choose level of compliance:

		Choose level of compliance:

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Placement of the IT program within the Education Faculty would assume that the computer science and educational science approaches and models are at least equally represented. We have become more convinced, after speaking various stakeholders, that this is actually the case. The program leader mentioned at some point that she "did not want teachers but computer scientists", but we later came to understand that actually many teachers follow this program. If not the case, it would be our recommendation to have both sides of the same medal represented in both the program content and students.	Of the 59 students who graduated from the master's program only 5 were computer scientists (with a first degree in computer science), thus obviously most students who enter the program are teachers. As for the course content, only one course requires students to use computer programming skills, the rest are based on a strong pedagogical reasoning perspective enhanced by technology.	Choose level of compliance:
We strongly suggest there should be room for more tailored and personalised setups of the curricula. Especially for an educational science program that advocated personalised learning. The Faculty should "teach as they preach".	I have addressed this issue in detail in the previous section explaining that the design of the curriculum is decided by the departmental board of the Department of Education.	Choose level of compliance:
In the course descriptions there is mention of lots of references and books. Although there is a distinction between mandatory and recommended literature, it is not always clear what is what and for which learning activities it should be studied. The course description were not very inspirational. It was stated that descriptions on paper are never passionate, but we feel there could be better mention of the didactical approach in the study guides, which after all is a strong point in this program.	This was the case with the course descriptions that were submitted four years ago. As I explained in the previous section, I have already updated the course descriptions and uploaded them to DIPAE's server, but it seems that the EEC had no time to look at the updated materials. The bibliographical references in the new course descriptions are categorized in a way that matches the units covered in the course.	Choose level of compliance:
We specifically asked for at least one representative Master thesis and one PhD thesis (preferably	I was never told by UCY that the EEC requested one representative Master thesis and one PhD thesis.	Choose level of compliance:

worked out and accepted in English) but did not receive them in time.	The day of the site visit at about 17:30 the EEC asked me to provide them with the theses (preferably in English) and of course I did so immediately. One of the PhD thesis submitted to the EEC won an international award as Best Dissertation Thesis (research by Elena Macrides).	
The curriculum has a rather rigid format of 12 EC courses which are taught in a weekly schedule of three-hour meetings. Many topics in instructional technology and education research require attention, but not on a 12 EC scale. Introducing smaller modules would make the programming more varied and flexible. Also, more intensive formats (e.g., a one week with 18 hours of active participation of students) could be considered.	As I explained in the previous section, the 12 ECTS modular structure of the curriculum is decided by the Faculty Board of the Department of Education and each program has to follow it. This is the current situation. However, as I stated, currently the Department is examining how to offer its courses in more flexible ways for various lengths of time. I am a member of this committee and we are looking into how some courses can be implemented in different time frames (i.e., some courses will have a 2-week duration, some others a four-week duration and so on). Once, we manage to do this, then I believe we will be able to discuss the 12-ECTS modular structure and how we can change it. We are definitely working toward the direction recommended by the EEC.	Choose level of compliance:
Qualitative methodology seems to receive less attention. It is either a small part of an integrated course with a strong emphasis on quantitative methods, or an elective. Qualitative research often rests on other paradigms than quantitative research; discussing these requires a more independent point of view.	True, but something that maybe it was not made clear to the EEC, is that if a student decides to pursue a master's thesis, and if the research question is one that needs to be answered by adopting a qualitative methodology, then lots of time is devoted to the qualitative research paradigm to ensure that the student is able to successfully complete his or her research. An example would be a recent master's thesis that was just completed about how blended learning provided a supportive environment for immigrants.	Choose level of compliance:
Recommendations on improving the format and the procedures for student assessment. The	The university website follows a strict format and accepts only a limited amount of information for	

methodology and evaluation of each course is announced in public but without specific details. Detailed information is given to students at the beginning of each course.	each course. Thus, we cannot upload as much information as we would like on the departmental website. However, the new course descriptions provide now more specific details about student assessment and are more informative than before. As the EEC stated, detailed information to the students is given at the beginning of the semester.	

3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The current leadership is an important strength but at the same time a weakness or potential risk. The committee feels that without the leader this program would not sustain. PhD students can only be trained to lecture to some extent, and there should at least be another staff (second) position on the topic of IT/ET in the program. The teaching staff seems highly receptive to take aboard the suggestions made by the EEC (combining with other programs, flexible curricular setup, opening up to English), but appears seriously hampered by university regulations and political restrictions. We observed some interesting 'shift of responsibility mechanisms' with teachers pointing at the department regulations, the department pointing at new agency restrictions, and feel that some interference on the governmental level might be counter-productive. We sincerely feel this vicious circle should somehow be broken. Our recommendation therefore goes out to the Rectorate to give some more leeway for innovative initiatives and offerings. **Such a first step could be to allow an online version of this program in English.** The growth of the program might also be a risk in the sense that than no longer the same personal attention and supervision can be provided without increasing the staff.	As we told the EEC, we are severely hampered by university regulations and governmental restrictions. The EEC, as they wrote in their report, are very well aware of this. The faculty staff of the program and the department of education are highly receptive to the recommendations made by the EEC and use them for a persuasive argument in the Senate to express urgency in the matter of hiring a new faculty member. They already gave us permission to offer an online version of the instructional technology program in English, which is expected to start in one year.	Choose level of compliance:
Promotion procedures seem to value research output the most. This has an effect on the efforts of the staff: they have many	The coordinator of the program is very well aware of the need to show innovation in the instructional technology program. While, this	Choose level of compliance:

publications, which is good of course. However, Instructional Technology also is an area of innovation, problem solving and design of technological solutions to problems in areas like robotics, virtual reality, gaming, hybrid teaching, big data and artificial intelligence. Contributions to these areas seem not to be valued explicitly in the staff evaluation and promotion procedures. This may affect the program: staff will be biased towards research and not towards innovation.	issue has not been raised in any of the promotion procedures, the program through the efforts of the coordinator has been involved in the design and development of innovative computer-based environments such as adaptive computer-based systems (i.e., e-TPCK system), PAUL (a personalized computer-based system), AI procedures for analyzing big data (see publications of the coordinator of the program on data analytics), and the efforts continue with new recent successful collaborations with the computer science department at UCY in developing an AI system to measure performance in sports. Likewise, the coordinator is developing standards for introducing AI in the corporate sector. Many of the publications of the coordinator of the program are related to the innovative component of the program.	
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
(ESG 1.4)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Since the program consists of very small numbers of students, everybody pretty much knows each other. So the need for centralized platforms for student monitoring is not that high. However, we would suggest that to Learning Management System (LMS) holding study materials and monitoring of progress (i.c. Blackboard) will be linked to the student information system used by the supportive staff (i.c. Bannerweb), in such a way that progress and completion of courses is automatically signalled towards the student info system.

The student's portal does not create and send any automatic notifications in the case of a student getting low grades. A recommendation would be that the portal notifies in that case the academic advisor or the tutor of the student in order to intervene. | It is true that BannerWeb does not contain monitoring information about the students, only summative data. Successful completion of courses is automatically signaled toward the student account in the BannerWeb system. The teaching staff are responsible for monitoring student progress throughout the semester.

The administration personnel monitor the ongoing student performance from one semester to the next. If students seem to be falling behind the instructor is informed to meet with the student. | Choose level of compliance: |
| Also, there is no mechanism/procedure in place for giving students the chance to complain about the process of teaching and learning or to assess a tutor's performance. | Maybe it was not mentioned to the EEC, but twice in the semester, students are asked to comment on the quality of the courses, anonymously, and suggest changes. Specifically, for EDU 583, students are asked to write a reflection paper at the end of the semester about how the course helped them develop thinking skills and suggest changes in the teaching methodology of the course. However, we are such a small community that everybody feels very comfortable with each other and it is often the case that students ask for permission to suggest changes in the course procedures. The coordinator of the course has a | Choose level of compliance: |

	close relationship with all students admitted in the program and often asks students to inform her about any difficulties they face and or things they would like to see different. The teaching staff communicate freely with each other and it is often the case that they collaborate to improve the teaching of their courses.	
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5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Tools and development approaches for immersive learning (like Serious Gaming) and XR (VR, AR and MR) applications should be further explored (both in the course content as lab facilities) since these are very timely ET applications for a variety of vocational learning solutions nowadays.	We do have VR equipment in the lab and use it in our courses. Based on the EEC's recommendations, I have already discussed with the department chair the purchase of a VR/AR platform that costs 15000 euros and he is looking into ways of how to buy it given the recent budget cuts.	Choose level of compliance:

It was claimed (by oral communication) that the dropout was 0%. It would have been nice to have seen some actual statistics of student numbers, dropout rates, and throughput times (speed of study), and student feed-back.	Prior to the site visit, I requested statistics from the department and I included them in the powerpoint presentation as follows:
	• Number of students admitted since 2011: 59
	• Number of students graduated: 59
	  • 2 males
	  • 57 females
	• Currently enrolled students: 9
	  • 1 male
	  • 8 females
	• Success rate: 100%
	
	Duration of studies is two years for each student.
		Choose level of compliance:

We have asked for student evaluations (both on the program and course level), but were told that student evaluations were not for external communication and only for internal use. Evaluations on the program level were available on faculty level, but neither provided to the committee on their request.	According to the Senate's decision course evaluation data are not to be used for external communication and only for internal use by the course instructor. As for the program data, I requested from the University to provide me with evaluation data obtained from the graduates upon completion of their program of study and was told that there was no data yet at the program level. Based on the EEC comment, I took the initiative and created an online questionnaire that will be forwarded to the graduates of the instructional technology program during the end of their fourth semester (which is the end of their studies).	Choose level of compliance:

Resources seem to be good with respect to open source software and robotics systems, but lack other materials (Arduino's; Virtual Reality). The small number of students that enroll in the program may influence the available budget negatively. Perhaps closer cooperation with the Department of Computer Science and IT-companies may result in sponsorships for these resources.	As I mentioned before, we do have VR systems, but maybe it was not made clear to the EEC. If you check the powerpoint presentation you will see that I mention VR in the resources. Yes, we do collaborate with the computer science department at UCY and also with the computer science department at NTNU in Norway in order to have access to such resources that often times they are too expensive for UCY to afford.	Choose level of compliance:
The university's mechanisms for counselling for the postgraduate students need to work as good as for undergraduate students. Even though the majority of postgraduate students study in part time because they work, a mechanism / procedure should be in place in order to track any student problems on time, like financial problems.	The administration personnel are tracking financial problems. In regards to the instructional technology program it has never brought to my attention by a student or the secretaries that a student is facing financial problems.	Choose level of compliance:

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The EEC is thankful for the trust placed in it. The opportunities to observe and talk with the students and staff of the Department have been frank and eye-opening. We have learned a lot.	We also thank the EEC for the rich and in-depth discussions we had during the site visit. We have also learned a lot from them and listened very carefully to everything they brought up.	Choose level of compliance:
We recommend that the program is supplemented or extended with an English-language version of the program. Opening up an international English Master's program would provide ample opportunities for more students, external funding, and thereby development of the personnel (larger, more varied and more international). This would further enhance the visibility and reputation of the University, Department and program.	As I mentioned before, we have submitted an application to UCY for an online English-language version of the instructional technology program and we awaiting instructions for our next action (probably to prepare the application for evaluation by DIPAE).	Choose level of compliance:
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C.

D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Charoula Angeli-Valanides	Professor	*chAngeli*
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Date: 15.5.2023