

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date.

Higher Education Institution's Response

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

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Διδακτορικό στην Κλινική Ψυχολογία

In English:

PhD in Clinical Psychology

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek

- **Programme's status:** Choose Status

- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 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
<p>Given the clinical nature of the professional component of this research document, we recommend that a Fitness to Practice and Fitness to Study policy be developed and deployed as part of the course requirements, and that such a policy be embedded in the course regulations. Such a policy needs to cover personal integrity and mental and physical capacity to work clinically. We note that the course is aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments for student disability, and FtP and FtS policies should of course take account of such considerations.</p>	<p>We accept this recommendation and the clinical committee is underway to prepare and set criteria for fitness to study and fitness to practice in line with international recommendations. We aim to have this completed before September 2023 and the next class enrollment.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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

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<p>It was clear to us that the research thesis can be quite variable in terms of the quantity and intensity of the work planned and conducted. Both present students and graduates commented on this, and identified the variability as an issue. We suggest that the course produce a clear statement of the requirements of the research thesis against which the research proposal should be judged. Such a definition should include the requirements set out in course regulations (eg contribution to knowledge), but in addition identify the anticipated volume of work (time likely to be spent on research development, such as the creation of new scales or experimental tasks), data collection time (eg whether the data are already available or have to be gathered), the samples being sought (clinical vs community/online recruitment) and so on. A reasonable benchmark would be the feasibility of completing the research within the time available on the course for this work, with some allowance for contingencies. Statistical power analyses should be used to justify sample sizes whilst also considering sample availability. All of these factors should be considered at the research proposal approval stage. It would be helpful if there were a means of gaining clarity regarding expectations of both supervisor and supervisee in relation to the research project. We noted that there was some</p>	<p>We accept this recommendation and the clinical committee is underway to prepare a statement of the requirements of the research thesis against which the research proposal should be judged. This statement will include the responsibilities of both supervisors and supervisees and be accompanied by a research contract to be signed prior to the commencement of study. This is expected to be ready by September 2023 and prior to the next class enrollment.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>variability in, for example, frequency of supervision meetings, extent to which the work was facilitated by the supervisor and so on. We regarded it as an important strength that the students have significant ownership of the development and implementation of the research project, but this allows significant variation in the nature of supervision. We do not wish to suggest that this be homogenised, but rather that the expectations be clarified. We suggest that the use of a research contract, indicating the responsibility of those involved, be developed and applied, perhaps in the form of a template which can be varied by those involved prior to project approval by the course, and the contract would then form part of the proposal for approval by the course. Broad headings would be responsibilities of the student, of the supervisor, of the Department and so on. Items specified could include anticipated frequency of meetings, maximum response times by both student and supervisor, expectations regarding data ownership and authorship and so on.</p>		
<p>We also would like the Department and Faculty to consider the appointment of a second supervisor for all research projects. This supervisor would be involved to a lesser degree, but would be in a position to step in where the first supervisor is unavailable, or when other difficulties arise. If the first supervisor becomes unavailable, the second supervisor would either become the first OR be responsible for ensuring</p>	<p>We accept this recommendation and will now include the second internal member of the dissertation committee to be named as co-supervisor.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>the recruitment of another first supervisor. This would ensure that a student would not become “stranded” as a result of staff changes. If this is implemented, the second supervisor’s role would be defined and agreed in the proposed research contract.</p>		
<p>We are aware of the fact that the Pandemic and accompanying mitigation measures have impacted teaching strategies, but would encourage the course to consider the range of skills training strategies, including the use of video examples, role play and so on. These are already deployed somewhat, and are appreciated by students, so further expansion would we think be a positive development.</p>	<p>We will ensure to specify in our syllabi where we use these methods and ensure that these will be expanded and carried out as suggested.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>In terms of course development, we note that usual “per semester” feedback is obtained. Given the complexity of this course and the need to integrate multiple streams, we would like the course team to consider more frequent feedback arrangements in relation to teaching, perhaps weekly, on a simple ratings basis (for example using MicroSoft forms) which feed into a review process with some student input.</p>	<p>Based on this suggestion, the clinical committee decided to implement two reflections (4 & 8 week of each course) to be discussed with the course professor and include reflections and qualitative feedback. We are in the process of developing a form to be used for these reflections. These reflections will be used to develop a common action plan with students. This will start to be implemented by the fall semester 2023-2024.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

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<p>Training programmes in clinical psychology are typically more demanding than other doctoral programmes, as they place equal importance on the preparation of both future scientists and competent practitioners. This makes one on one involvement of the teaching staff fundamental to adequate training. Thus, algorithms for determining the number of teaching staff allotted to such programmes should not be the same as those used for purely research based doctoral programmes; instead, they should consider this unique aspect and increase the number of the teaching staff.</p>	<p>We have brought this issue to the attention of the chair of our department to be considered and for this recommendation to be provided to the university. The chair is in the process of examining the algorithm and along with the clinical committee will make recommendations to the departmental council. The clinical committee have requested at least one temporary teaching staff until a position becomes available to our department which has committed that the next hire will go to clinical psychology.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>While end-of-semester student evaluations of courses and teaching staff are useful, further improvements could be made by requesting weekly feedback (electronically and anonymously), for more immediate and specific feedback (i.e., rating the clarity of the teaching and the relevance of the topics, indicating whether topics have been covered in other courses).</p>	<p>Similar to the point above in section 2, we will incorporate this into the reflections to be carried out twice each semester and can be used to devise an action plan and modify course content based on this reflection.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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

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<p>The most obvious area for improvement, as set out above, is to increase the number of students admitted. The programme is particularly strong by virtue of the excellent efforts of current staff; such an increase would of course require a commensurate increase in staffing.</p>	<p>We thank the committee for their thoughtful comments and agree with their reflection here that increasing the number of students will not be feasible given the current staff numbers. The clinical committee will continue to argue this to the departmental council and continue to advocate for receiving new faculty positions.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

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<p>The students identified their internal peer support systems as being particularly important, but that this could be difficult to find time for. We recommend that the course consider co-producing ways of doing this, such as by the allocation of regular slots for facilitated or peer based reflective support sessions inserted in the timetable. Involving students in the design of such a system would, in our view, be important.</p>	<p>We totally agree with this and decided to include this and set aside time during our practicum supervision seminars for students to have the time for peer support. The clinical committee aims to keep discussing this with students so as to create together a system that can be beneficial. We also expect this to constitute a topic in our clinical seminars. We expect these support sessions to happen at least 2-3 times throughout the semester.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>We understand that Postgraduate Research Supervision is not allowed for within the Faculty Workload Model (WLM). We would like the Faculty and University to consider the impact of this on such a supervision intensive course. We were provided with an extensive and impressive list of student publications co-authored with staff supervisors and typically in international journals. It is quite clear to us that the reputation of the University is enhanced by this course in a highly significant way, which does not appear to be reflected in the WLM. The course is much sought after and its graduates are of high impact (as indeed are the current students) and the University might want to consider expanding the provision, which inevitably means (a) taking account of the work carried out by staff in the WLM and (b) expanding the staff team, particularly in areas where applied skills are either absent or scarce. Clearly this is a matter for the University, but we would like to point out the opportunity presented by course</p>	<p>Thank you for recognizing our hard work and its outcomes. The clinical committee will continue to bring this to the attention of the University and request that research supervision be somehow counted into the Faculty Workload Model. We will also continue to request the hiring of new clinical faculty to complement current ones.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



<p>expansion. The almost unique element of a key service being provided by the students (in terms of in-house counselling and mental health treatment for other students) should in our view be taken into account.</p>		
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6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

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<p>As outlined above, we consider that the course should develop a clear statement of expectations for the thesis which allows comparability across research work, for example, in terms of the anticipated expenditure of time on the research. Clearly this is a complex issue which would benefit from guidance both for students and staff involved in proposal approval. We noted the willingness of the staff team to engage in such an enterprise. Also as noted above, we are strongly of the view that a fitness to practise policy should be developed and implemented. Doing so will both have the effect of protecting the public in terms of clinical activity on placement, and also protecting the reputation of the University.</p>	<p>We completely agree and as stated above we have already started to work on this and hope to implement these in the upcoming year. This will be carried out at the beginning of studies during students' first semester.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>The visiting panel would very much like the Faculty to consider how the work on this leading programme impacts staff time, and how best to reflect this work in the Workload Model for those staff. We consider that an expansion of the programme, if this were consistent with the strategic aims of the University, would be highly desirable provided appropriate resources were made available.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. We will make sure to pass these along to the university and hope that more resources as well as acknowledgement of the time spent on supervision will start to be counted in our faculty load.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The unique nature of this programme should in our view be capitalised on by all concerned. To make any development more effective, we consider that the Faculty should review the way it managed the Workload Model for the very considerable investment of time by supervisors in relation to the Clinical PhD. The programme could expand but needs investment in staffing and a clear recognition of the work of existing staff, which both assists the students but also enhances the reputation and broader impact of the University.</p>	<p>As stated above, we will pass this information along to the University for further consideration.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>We recommend that the course provides clear guidance on the research requirements for the thesis, integrated with the proposal approval process. This will ensure closer comparability of workload for students, and indeed supervisors. For a similar reason, we recommend that the course develop a research contract which indicates the responsibilities of all parties (student, supervisor/s, department). This to be from a general template with agreed modifications in order to preserve flexibility We would like the course and University to consider the introduction of a second supervisor to supplement the main one. The course should continue its efforts to enhance the skills training elements in the course by means of a range of strategies (video, role play and so on). The development of the course would in our view be further enhanced by increasing the frequency with which feedback is obtained, and to feed the results of this into course development processes We consider that it would be helpful for the inclusion of</p>	<p>As mentioned above, we aim to implement all these suggestions and have to prepare the relevant guidelines and forms to be used by the fall semester 2023-2024.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



<p>reflective/supportive sessions in the timetable to further enhance peer support; ideally such a development would be co-produced with the students.</p> <p>We would strongly recommend that consideration be given to the development and implementation of a fitness to practise policy, integrated with course regulations.</p>		
<p>As a panel we were very impressed by the enthusiasm, commitment and satisfaction from the leadership team, the broader staff group and supervisors, and above all by the current students and graduates, who clearly value the course and for the graduates have been able to take their learning and skills into the broader community to the benefit of those experiencing mental health problems and issues.</p>	<p>Thank you.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

C.



D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Maria Karekla	Associate Professor	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
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Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: 21/4/2023

