oc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 12/6/2022

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

- **Town: LIMASSOL**

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

  Midwifery, 2 years, 145 ECTS, 4 semesters and 1 summer semester

  In Greek:

  Μεταπτυχιακό στη Μαιευτική

  In English:

  Master's in Midwifery

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

  - **Programme's status:**
- Evaluated by CYQAA and get accreditation the academic year 2017-2018

- **Concentrations (if any): No Concentrations**

  In Greek: No Concentrations
  In English: No 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 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*

- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

    - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
    - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*

- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1)*

- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

We would like to thank the EEC for the comprehensive evaluation of the programme and, of course, the very constructive comments, suggestions, and recommendations for improvement. We have now studied the report and, below, we provide a detailed response. Even though the Committee identified four of these points as of higher importance (re-iterated in section "Conclusions and Final Remarks, pp. 16), we provide a response to all points raised by the Committee, as part of the "Areas of Improvement and Recommendation" in each of the five sections.

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development
(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

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EEC Comment: The bibliographies of all module descriptors should be reviewed to ensure latest editions are referenced and available to the students, and versions in the Greek language are noted where available.

Thank you for your suggestion regarding the need to review and updated the recommended bibliographies across course modules. These have now been reviewed by each module lead and, where we identified the need, the bibliographies have been updated accordingly to include the latest editions of recommended textbooks or other reading material. Where available, Greek language versions or other recommended reading material were added. (see Appendix 1 for more details)

EEC Comment: The EEC recommends that module MID_218 -Writing and Presentation Skills of Research Work, which consists of 1 hr and 3 ECTS to be combined with the MID_114 Research Methodology module

We would like to thank the EEC for this suggestion. Indeed, the MID_218 module, of the 2nd semester, was only 1 hour and it can be combined with another research-oriented module with the purpose of leading to a more holistic and comprehensive approach to developing the students' skills in this area. However, MID-114_Research Methodology is a 1st semester module and aims to establish the theoretical basis of research methods, thus it should proceed any module targeting more advanced skills. We believe it would be much preferable for MID_218 (1 hr) to be combined with MID_219 (2 hrs) instead ("Recent developments in Midwifery Research- Scientific Writing and Presentation Skills ").

Other than the fact that these two modules run in the same semester (unlike MID-114), and hence combining them would not affect the ECTS distribution of the programme as a whole, this modification is more natural in that these two modules have similar learning objectives and have always been largely complementary with the aim to cultivate practical writing and presentations skills. Thus, the new module will be entitled "Recent developments in Midwifery Research- Scientific Writing and Presentation Skills (MID_219)", will run in Semester 2 (13 X three-hour session) and will carry 8 ECTS (the combination of the two modules).

As part of this new combined module (MID-219), students will have the opportunity to (a) participate in seminars by invited guest speakers to discuss as a group any methodological and theoretical issues stemming from the presented work, (b) establish the concepts and principles of good scientific writing and presenting through both theoretical learning as well as practical workshops focused on their own proposed research work and (c) by the end of the course, prepare and present their research protocol to the rest of the group. Detailed description of the module can be found in Appendix 2 .

EEC Comment: The EEC commends and encourages staff to continue to pursue the possibility of establishing the *Motherhood University Clinic.* If established, this will offer an excellent, alternative placement opportunity for the programme students.

We would like to thank the EEC for identifying the excellent potential of the Motherhood University Clinic. Indeed, this is an important goal of the Strategic Planning of the Department, and indeed the University. This will not only provide additional / in-house training opportunities for the programme students, but it is of strategic value as it holds the potential of showcasing the role of Midwives in the community, currently not fully supported by the Cypriot healthcare system and/or practices. To this regard, the Department has established a close partnership with the Municipality of Limassol with the aim of offering Midwifery services on an in-kind and pilot basis, in the first instance, as part of the Municipality's plan to upgrade and expand its Social Welfare Services. We are pleased to inform that the preparations have been put in place for the Motherhood University Clinic to start its operation in September 2022 and students' placements will start at the same time.

EEC comment: Ongoing care and attention should be given the clinical requirements of the programme, especially to enhance workforce mobility, and in being readily adaptable to future maternity care needs and provision.

The faculty of the Nursing Department of Cyprus University of Technology and more specifically the leads of the Midwifery programme are in search of clinical placements that meet the training needs of future midwives. As discussed in the evaluation, this has become increasingly challenging due to (a) the rising caesarean sections in the country (in 2020, reaching, or exceeding 60% in some districts) and (b) the changing proportion of births occurring in the private vs the public sector (70:30 respectively), which has been rising further since the establishment in 2020 of the General Healthcare System unifying the private-public sectors. Currently, the Department places student-midwives in all state hospitals (through the ongoing collaboration with the Ministry of Health/ Nursing services), while in the last two years, the Department has expanded its collaboration with the private sector. Currently, four maternity clinics have completed the suitability evaluation, based on agreed criteria with the Nursing and Midwifery Council, and there is a continuous and close collaboration with the Council to evaluate more maternity care hospitals/clinics all over Cyprus to select suitable placements.

EEC comment: Assignment burden reflective of ECTS load should be detailed in the relevant module descriptors (see also recommendations, section)

Thanks for the comment. We have reviewed all module descriptions to ensure that Assignment burden clearly state the load in the module descriptor. Each written assignment aligned with course learning outcomes and the ECTS workload for the relevant modules. Students at the first day of the course receive clear instructions about their written assignments.

Module	ECTS	Contact hours	Assignments	Mid-term exam	Final exam
MID-114_Research Methodology	3	28	Written course assignment (3000 words) 60%	√	

MID-215 Epidemiology and Biostatistics	3	28	Written course assignment & oral presentation (40%) – 15 ppt slides/		√
MID_219 Midwifery Research-Scientific Writing and Presentation Skills	8	42	Written Course assignment 1= 40% (20 slides) Students are assessed in both roles (presenter and facilitator). Written Course assignment 2 = 60 % (3000 words)		
MID_325 Reproductive / sexual / women's health	3	28	Written course assignment (2000 words) 20%	√	√
MID_316 Promotion of health and education	3	28	Written course assignment (2000 words-Teaching plan) 20 ppt slides		
MID_- 428 Ethics and Deontology of Midwifery profession	5	42	Written course assignment (2000 words) 20%	√	√

EEC comment: Consideration can be given to the involvement of other important stakeholders in the content and design of the programme (e.g., clinical midwives from student placement areas of practice, or women and their families as recipients of midwifery care).

As mentioned during the visit, despite the fact that the formal involvement of stakeholders in the design of the programme/courses is not standard practice across the University, the faculty of the Midwifery programme have very close collaborations with all stakeholders through educational, research, advocacy, and outreach activities. Thus, there is a constant feedback loop on the design and content of the modules with both clinical midwives/ other health professionals from student placement settings as well as NGOs who represent mothers/families (for example, Birth Forward, Cyprus Breastfeeding Association and others). Furthermore, several Faculty members participate in National and Scientific Advisory Committees, both governmental and non-governmental (such as National Breastfeeding Committee, Family Planning, Birth Forward). However, we acknowledge that it is important to both formalize and enhance the participatory nature of this process. Thus, starting

from the new intake of students, we will set up a structured review and evaluation procedure in the context of an annual meeting of the programme committee with all mentioned stakeholders. Recommendations and suggestions will be recorded and presented to the Postgraduate Committee and the Departmental Council for consideration.

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

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EEC comment: The programme should be appraised and evaluated by other important stakeholders (e.g., midwives, pregnant women, breastfeeding women) in order to meet their needs in a more comprehensive way.

The structure and content of the programme is reviewed and updated, as necessary, every 2 years following feedback from the cohort of students, course instructors and clinical midwives from student placement areas. Need for modifications regarding the content of specific course modules are discussed and approved by the Programme Committee whereas any major modifications, for example, regarding the structure of the programme, modules and clinical placements is approved by the Departmental Postgraduate Committee and Departmental Council.

As also discussed above (point 1.5), despite the fact that there is no official requirement or agreed process by the University for the involvement of stakeholders in the design, assessment and evolvement of programmes/ course modules, the MSc Midwifery programme faculty are in a good position to inform the programme assessment process due to their close formal and informal links to governmental and non-governmental actors in midwifery and maternity care. This process is continuous and there are a number of recent examples where stakeholder feedback has informed and shaped the programme content either at the level of a particular course module or at the level of the programme as a whole, even if on an ad-hoc basis.

For example, for the course "Normal birth", clinical mentors and practicing midwives from midwifery-led birth suites as well as women who had normal birth contributed to the development of the course content. Furthermore, there is a strong link between teaching and research in the Midwifery programme, so the experiences and needs of pregnant women in Cyprus, as recorded in ongoing research studies, indirectly inform the content of the programme as well as largely shape the experience of the students (who are directly involved in the research process).

Two characteristic examples are: (1) The European Babies Born Better programme [1] and other related research studies identified womens' experiences during birth and (2) the participatory action research programme Baby Buddy which identified, through a Delphi study and extensive focus groups, the learning needs and experiences of Cypriot women during the transition to motherhood. This provided the basis for the development of the content of the Baby Buddy webapp, but the information was valuable for further informing the educational activity of the programme.

[1] Hadjigeorgiou E, Spyridou A. Babies Born Better. (https://www.babiesbornbetter.org/)

[1] Hadjigeorgiou E, Katsie C, Papadopoulou M, Christofi MD, Christoforou A. Women's experiences of VBAC in Cyprus: a qualitative study. BMC pregnancy and childbirth. 2021 Dec;21(1):1-2.

[2] Kolokotroni O, Hadjigeorgiou E, Gourounti C, Christodoulides V, Sarantaki A, Nicolaou C, Lykeridou K, Karanikola M, Kouta C, Middleton N. eDelphi survey to shape the content of a digital resource to enhance parental health literacy. European Journal of Public Health. 2019 Nov 1;29 (Supplement_4):ckz186-123).

However, as we have also acknowledged above, it is important to set up a structured process of directly (not only indirectly) involving the stakeholders, and in particular pregnant women, in programme appraisal. In the context of the annual meeting of the programme committee, a series of focus groups with representatives of all mentioned stakeholders (pregnant women, mothers, parents, mentors, clinical midwives, hospital managers) will be performed. Recommendations and suggestions will be presented to the Postgraduate Committee and the Departmental Council for consideration.

3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

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ECC comment: Academic staff to be supported to undertake a teaching qualification and / or Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy to improve the standing of their teaching profile.

All academic course module coordinators are PhD holders and a number of them (Dr Hadjigeorgiou, Dr Kolokotroni) also hold formal postgraduate qualifications in adult pedagogies (e.g. PgCert). We agree with the committee on the importance of continuously improving and enhancing the pedagogical skills of all academic staff. In fact, even though not a formal requirement by Universities in Cyprus as standard (unlike, for instance, the UK where a formal qualification is required by higher education institutions), the Cyprus University of Technology is actively encouraging the continuous professional development of its academic/teaching staff. In fact, CUT has established the Learning Development Network – a cross-departmental network (https://ldn.cut.ac.cy/) with the objective to promote innovation in teaching and learning. The Network aims at: (a) the design and implementation of seminars and workshops based on innovative teaching practices, (b) the promotion of exchange of good teaching practices, (c) the contribution to the design of a long-term educational policy of the University, (d) the continuous support of academic practice and new creative learning spaces at the University. The Network is composed of three Support Groups: the Academic Group, is the Student Learning Support Group and the Educational Technology Group. The Network has already organised 50 workshops with over 1000 participants.

Further to the opportunities provided by the Learning Network, the Department of Nursing is actively investing in the continuous professional development of its academic/teaching staff. This involves both formal Department-wide activities as well as supporting personal training imitative through Department own-funds. In fact, the Department performed a structured needs assessment exercise amongst faculty to investigate needs in further developing into effective teachers. As a result of this exercise, the Department offered during the 2021-22 academic year, three continuous professional development seminars/workshops for all staff on (a) curriculum design using active learning and other student-centered approaches, (b) assessment principles and (c) designing and implement OSCEs in clinical skills assessments. These were the top priorities, as identified in the needs assessment exercise, while more educational activities will be organized in the next period.

Dr Eleni Hadjigeorgiou has MSc in Midwifery education and holds a PgCert from Pedagogical Institute in Cyprus.

Dr Angelos Kasianos is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) since 2017 and was a trainer whilst he was in the UK for those who were preparing their portfolio for their Associate Fellow or Fellow applications.

Dr Ourania Kolokotroni has postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical and Healthcare Education, St George's University of London (2020)

ECC comment: Academic staff to take on external examining roles / visiting lecturer roles in other universities to further extend the quality of their teaching and standard of assessment in the wider field.

While the Department enjoys an extensive international network of collaborators, both in Midwifery as well as Nursing, this is mainly in the context of research. Enhancing the links with universities internationally, in the context of teaching and training is part of the Strategic Goals of the University. Towards this end, every Department has a budget on an annual basis for Visiting Academics. This is a scheme for supporting incoming academics to spend a short-period of time at CUT. Each Department can request a budget, but funds are commonly limited and need to be prioritised, both across Departments as well as across programmes within Departments. While there isn't an equivalent University scheme for outgoing academic visits, there are currently at least three ways by which mobility towards international Universities is supported: (a) Erasmus mobility funds (which are very well utilised in the Department of Nursing both for incoming and outgoing mobility of academic teachers), (b) Sabbatical (commonly, faculty members incorporate a period abroad for research and/or teaching in their plan which is pre-approved by the Department Council) and (c) personal initiative through the annual personal fund (Departmental own-revenue), each faculty member at the Department of Nursing can access and is dedicated to research activity, networking and/or professional development. All faculty members at the Department of Nursing make systematic use of all three means to support their mobility. Admittedly, more importance has been given to research activities than teaching/training activities, but all three policies can cover mobility for teaching purposes as well.

ECC comment: All teaching staff to engage in peer observation of teaching at least once per semester to aid professional development and enhance quality of teaching.

Although there is currently no official University requirement of peer observation in place, teaching staff often engage in peer observation of teaching several times per semester, not least because a number of modules of the programme are delivered by two instructors collaboratively (e.g. MID_114, MID_219, MID_418). However, we appreciate the value of having a structured peer observation process for all faculty and our department will engage in training of all tutors on peer assessments in the next academic year so that the process is formally introduced and implemented.

It should also be mentioned that a University-wide scheme of promoting peer-to-peer classroom observation has been recently established with the initiative of the University Learning Development Network - LDN (more information about the scheme: https://ldn.cut.ac.cy/peer-to-peer-classroom-observations/). The **"Peer Classroom Observation"** Action is currently implemented on a voluntary basis with a recommendation to be performed once annually by all faculty members. The process

involves feedback by members of the Learning Development Network as well as observers from the same Faculty, and it involves a four-stage process: pre-observation, observation, post-observation feedback and reflection. All teaching observations by peers are confidential and documented to support academics' teaching practices.

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

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ECC comment: To ensure the programme module descriptors are complete and comprehensive, the EEC recommends that the pre-requisite modules to those modules taken subsequently (e.g., year 2) in the programme should be documented in the module descriptors.

Currently, the programme has no pre-requisite modules. Thus, even if a student does not achieve a pass mark in a module of the first year, they can continue with the modules of the second year and will be expected to re-take the module they failed when it is offered again. Even though not ideal, this is mainly driven by (a) the current lack of capacity to offer all modules on an annual basis (there is a new intake of students every two years) and (b) the University's policy of a minimum of five registered students per module. In the case of smaller audiences, the course module could be offered during the summer semester, specifically for those who need to repeat it.

ECC comment: To ensure the programme module descriptors are complete and transparent the EEC recommends that the maximum word count for submitted written assignments should be included in the module descriptors. This information is required to illustrate that the assignment burden with respect to word count is aligned with the ECT load for the relevant modules.

Thank you for your comment. According to Department/University policy, all course assignments (including type/ word count etc) is declared in advance on the Course Outline, which is given to the students and uploaded on the course page/moodle platform. Furthermore, this is presented to the students on the first day of each course, where they receive instructions about their written assignments. Even though it varies across modules and type of assignment, a typical word count for a written assignment is around 2000-3000. We have reviewed all course outlines to make sure that the above standard is observed across the board, and where necessary, this was clarified further. see also Table of assignment workload above (point 1.4)

ECC comment: To advance student mobility, trans-institution exchanges and international elective placements (e.g., 1-week) self-organized by students (albeit supervised and approved by Department staff) can be further considered.

Thank you for this important suggestion. The Department of Nursing has several bilateral agreements with academic institutions in Europe and is indeed one of the most active Department

in the Erasmus student exchange programme – both incoming and outgoing. Nevertheless, it is true that currently there is, by far, more active mobility among undergraduate nursing students than postgraduate students, including students in the Midwifery programme. We will work closely with our University Erasmus office to explore opportunities specifically for Midwifery students. However, due to the structure, fast-pace, and requirements of the programme we don't expect that whole semester visits will be a good match or popular with the students themselves. We truly appreciate the ECC's understanding that such trans-institution visits would by default be short (e.g. 1-2 weeks). The Department will explore available opportunities for such exchanges among the network of our international collaborators, and, at least in the first instance, they are more likely to take the form of observation visits, rather than formally attending a course or a clinical placement. If, on the other hand, such an activity is self-organised by the students (as is the ECC suggestions), the Department can certainly recognize and credit the activity, accordingly, provided that it is planned in agreement with the Department and in advance of the actual activity. Lastly, it should be mentioned that student mobility for the purposes of providing experience in research are certainly easier to organized and have been made possible during the scientific meetings and other activities of European projects (such as COST 18211, Perinatal mental health, etc).

ECC comment: Unique and innovative midwifery student prizes could be further developed.

It might not have been clear from the submitted material/ committee visit that recognizing academic excellence is already a standard practice in the Department. Both the Department of Nursing as well as the School of Health Sciences have always offered an annual prize to the graduate with the highest academic performance, across all programmes of study, both undergraduate and postgraduate, and of course Midwifery. This is a monetary prize, from own-revenue Departmental/School funds. More effort will be made to fund more midwifery student prizes in the future, with a focus on more innovative awards, other than academic performance alone (GPA) and in partnership with societal stakeholders – for example, these may be a "Best Research Contribution in Midwifery" award in association with the Midwifery Committee of the Cyprus Nurses and Midwives Association, based on the students' contribution to the annual scientific conference of CYNMA, or "Innovative Midwifery practice" in association with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. This is an area the Department will have to explore further both for the MSc Midwifery progranme as well as all other postgraduate programmes.

5. **Learning resources and student support**
   (ESG 1.6)

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ECC comment: The classroom, the material and the laboratory equipment are in the same room for purposes of interaction. However, it is recommended to transfer the classroom and the laboratory equipment to a larger room to provide more space for mobility around the equipment and improve esthetically the environment of the classroom.

The Department of Nursing currently has the sole use of two buildings – a building with faculty offices/small-group classrooms and a building with research and teaching labs. Of course, the Department also uses the University infrastructure (amphitheaters, classrooms, computer rooms,

and so on) for its educational activity which spans from the undergraduate (and largest) programme to its six postgraduate programmes, including the MSc Midwifery. Currently, most of the educational activities of the midwifery programme are accommodated within the Midwifery Classroom in the Kalypso building. Even though the space is quite large and multi-functional (i.e. it can accommodate classroom arrangement, small-group round-table tutorials, laboratory instruction etc), unfortunately the same space also accommodates some of the laboratory equipment of the Intensive Care module (4th year Nursing programme). Even though the Midwifery students and 4th year Nursing students occupy the space on different days of the week, this current arrangement is indeed not ideal; however, this arrangement is not permanent. According to the Strategic Development Plan of the University, a dedicated custom-built campus for the School of Health Sciences will develop around the current location of the Department of Rehabilitation University Clinic of the School of Health Sciences (this is in close proximity to the current location, just behind the Old Limassol Hospital). This plan has at least a five-year horizon. Thus, in the meanwhile, the Department will explore ways to re-locate the ICU laboratory in a different part of the building, which already has several other clinical teaching labs in order to provide a dedicated space for the Midwifery programme.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

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