

Doc. 300.1.2

# Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 1/9/2020

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
**CYPRUS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**
- **Town:** LIMASSOL
- **Programme of study**  
**Name (4 SEMESTERS, 110 ECTS)**

**In Greek:**

ΜΑΣΤΕΡ ΑΝΑΠΤΥΞΙΑΚΕΣ ΔΙΑΤΑΡΑΧΕΣ ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑΣ

**In English:**

MSc DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

- **Language(s) of instruction:** MAINLY GREEK WITH 3 COURSES IN ENGLISH
- **Programme's status:** New

**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. Introduction

The external examination committee (from now on EEC) was asked by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education to evaluate the plans for a new MSc program in Developmental Communication Disorders (SDCD) at the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT). The evaluation included a thorough analysis of the accreditation report prepared by the institution, including an evaluation of the Internal Evaluation Committee, and a site visit.

The site visit was planned for May 2020, but due to the corona virus crisis, it was postponed. In June it was decided that a remote site visit would be planned, which took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July. The EEC had online meetings with the Rector of the Institution, with members of the Internal Evaluation Committee, with the dean of the Faculty and the program coordinator, with the teachers and prospective students and with administrative staff. As the EEC could not visit the premises of the institution physically, two videos were made available to the EEC, one of the University of Technology and one on the rehabilitation clinic.

The MSc program in Developmental Communication Disorders will consist of thirteen courses corresponding to 6 or 8 ECTS depending on the course, and including a postgraduate dissertation or the independent study which is credited with 30 ECTS. The training and specialization of the students will be achieved through lectures, research methods, seminars / workshops, specialized clinical case studies of pathological patients as well as through the postgraduate dissertation in which current cognitive theories within the field DCD will be closely discussed.

After reading the accreditation report, the EEC had some questions on the various aspects that they needed to be evaluated in this report. Most of these questions were answered satisfactorily and the meetings led to insightful extra information. On the basis of this, the EEC can conclude that all standards are met. Below we will give a more elaborate description of how these standards are met and in some cases we give some suggestions for improvement. The EEC wants to add that not all standards could be evaluated yet, as this is a new program. This is true of standards relating to assessments, student progression, recognition and certification, which could only be reviewed considering the future plans on these aspects and current practice elsewhere within the university. The EEC saw in the admission report that the program itself will have an internal evaluation after three years. If this is not already planned by the Quality Assurance Agency, the EEC feels that it may be helpful to have another external evaluation of the program after it has been running for about five years.

## 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)

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### *Areas of improvement and recommendations*

Two aspects of improvement follow from the above-mentioned strengths. Although the EEC saw how thoroughly the Master Program was planned, certain aspects of 'mastersness' were missing from the learning outcomes; for example there was no explicit expectation that students should be able to synthesise complex information, to learn and work independently, and to show a critical, scientific way of thinking. As they stand, the overall learning outcomes of the program and the course descriptions focus primarily on knowledge and skills, but they should also include reference to development of higher level academic skills. In the meetings it was clear that the staff team does have an expectation of masters level performance and we strongly recommend that more reference to this should be added to the course descriptions and the learning outcomes.

***The coordinator of the Master's program and her team would like to thank the EEA members for the insightful comments and commitment in providing prompt responses. The "mastersness" of the proposed program as reflected via the learning outcomes. For this, the coordinator has revised learning outcomes by including higher end verbs reflection higher level learning outcomes.***

A second recommendation deals with access to information about quality assurance. The EEC were given information about many committees and groups that are concerned with quality assurance (Quality Assurance University Committee, Quality Assurance Department Committee, 8

Department of Rehabilitation Board, Internal Evaluation Committee, Program Coordination Committee), but the responsibilities of each group were not fully clear. In discussion with staff, the EEC were told that there is also an Examination Board, which plays a major role in quality assurance, but no information could be found about this board. Teaching and Examination regulations were not available to the EEC, although they were mentioned in the documentation. This made it difficult for the EEC to gain a good over view of quality assurance processes. We felt that we had sufficient evidence to agree that the programme will comply with standards but we recommend that program documentation should include a summary of the various committees and boards involved in quality assurance, with a brief description of their roles and responsibilities.

For addressing this issue, we provide a table/list of the process and steps involved in quality assurance of either a new program or revised program. The process of Quality Control entails a number of stages that also encompass feedback from students: **1. Department Quality Control Committee with Students Representatives reviews the proposed program and forwards to -> 2 Department Undergraduate and Graduate programs Committee which forwards to -> ; 3. Department Council Monthly Meetings with student representatives checks the proposed program and forwards to -> 5. School Council Committee for recommendations/ revisions and resubmission for and forwards -> 6. Senate Studies Committee for existing programs (with student representatives) to Strategic Planning University Committee for newly proposed programs which forwards to 7. University Quality Assurance Committee for final decision regarding final submission to CYQAA.**

A final recommendation for the future is to do everything possible to maintain good contact with graduates of this MSc program and to involve alumni in future quality assurance.

***Noted as a recommendation, one way to maintain contact is through the scheduling of a bi-monthly case-study round table discussion where colleagues present challenging cases with all participants contributing thorough suggestions. Furthermore, the Department organizes social meetings every year with alumini students under the Auspices of the Cyprus Association of Registered Speech Language Therapists in March and December of each year.***

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

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### ***Areas of improvement and recommendations***

Some areas of evaluation are tentative at this stage (e.g. whether the planned practical training techniques meet the academic standards) and we recommend that further evaluation of the different teaching methods should take place after the first and second year of the running program. This should include feedback from both staff and students.

***This is indeed a very important recommendation. We will ensure that upon completion of the first cycle (this is new program) students can provide official feedback through course and program evaluation survey to be conducted/prepared by faculty. We will seek assistance from other departments and from the CUT Committee of Quality Assurance.***

The use of didactic face-to-face teaching should be used sparingly, with a greater emphasis on more active, student-directed approaches to learning. Although discussion with staff suggested that this would be the case, this is not the impression given by some of the course descriptions. For example, the program team could consider the use of peer tutoring whereby second year students teach students in their first year, thus encouraging the development of the skills required in higher level professional and academic practice.

***This is indeed a very important recommendation. We will ensure that students be given the opportunity to get involved in peer tutoring especially during courses related to seminars in SLP, thesis and seminar in research methodology. In some courses students might have a chance to tutor their peers on a number of clinical cases that are of particular interest (i.e., through our affiliation and MOU with the Cyprus Institute of neurology & genetics offering the trading on dysphagia evaluation and in special populations such as neurodegenerative disorders; in addition students can tutor their peers on specific***

***disorders (i.e. laryngectomy rehabilitation) through their involvement with a number of Hospitals and ENT affiliations.***

A more detailed description of the learning involved in the master's thesis or independent study in DCD sciences is recommended, in order to demonstrate more clearly how the learning outcomes will be achieved and evaluated. For example, if these are not already envisaged we suggest the inclusion of teaching and learning methods such as masters thesis seminars, the use of reflective learning, self-evaluation (or peer-evaluation) reports and practical exercises relating to ethical approval.

We also encourage the team to consider the incorporation of a specialized DCD internship (+ 10 ECTS) for those students who already have a SLP certificate. Students are undertaking an academic educational program which is very focused on professional issues and their learning may be greatly enhanced by the opportunity to apply their new knowledge and insight to clinical practice. Students who participated in the online evaluation event were in favour of such a possibility. Two of them were intending to continue clinical work alongside full time study on the MSc programme and so would be able to maintain clinical skills and implement new insights, but this will not be possible for many students and short-term or part-time internships might be a more manageable approach to integration of academic and clinical skills.

***We have added a paragraph in the actual document (thesis section). We might not be able to add 10+ ECTS at this point as this might shift the number of proposed ECTS and might violate the CYQAA standards and rules. With all due respect, we will be able to consider and adopt the 10 plus ECTS after the program completes its first cycle.***

It may be sensible to encourage students who already have a SLP certificate, and are therefore already familiar with clinical case material, to do a master's thesis in order to maximize development of new skills. ***This comment will be adopted. It is indeed very important to maximize one's skills for the benefit of other's knowledge gain.***

### 3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

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#### *Areas of improvement and recommendations*

The EEC encourages the university to ensure that staff receive opportunities for development in the area of teaching and learning that are equivalent to the support provided for development of research skills. It was clear that very good support had been provided to the team by Prof Nicos Souleles during the development of the program, but it will be important to provide ongoing staff development opportunities to ensure that teaching and learning approaches are appropriate for the level of study.

***The University is constantly supporting Teaching Staff through ongoing staff development opportunities in order to ensure that teaching and learning approaches are appropriate for the level of study. For example the university provides support thorough the employment of teacher assistants and TAs during course work, provides training for online e-learning (this was evident during the COVID-19 period) where professors had to teach on-line. The University provided constant assistance and also updated the e-learning platform on daily bases. On a different note, the CUT, provides funding for covering expense of short term visiting professor who can train both students and teachers on issues related to methodology of rehabilitation through single case studies (a very important recent trend in methodological aspects of rehabilitative sciences).***



#### 4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

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## 5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

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## 6. Additional for distance learning programmes

(ALL ESG)

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## 7. Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

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## 8. Additional for joint programmes (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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