Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 01/06/2021

07.14.318.014

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution: Frederick University**
- **Town: Nicosia**
- **School: Engineering**
- **Department: Architecture**
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

Programme

In Greek:

Δίπλωμα Αρχιτέκτονα Μηχανικού (Integrated Master) (5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 300 ECTS)

Δυνατότητα αποφοίτησης στα 4 χρόνια με Πτυχίο Αρχιτεκτονικής (240 ECTS, Πτυχίο Αρχιτεκτονικής)
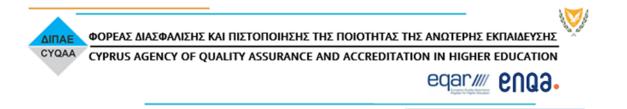
In English:

Diploma Degree of Architect Engineer (Integrated Master) (5 academic years, 300 ECTS)

Bachelor's degree in Architecture is obtained after 4 academic years (240 ECTS, Bachelor of Architecture)).
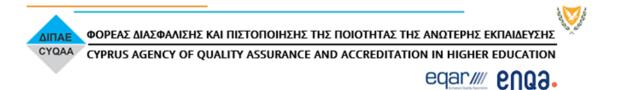
Language(s) of instruction: English and Greek

Programme's Status: Currently Operating

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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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.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department 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. 300.3.1).*

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

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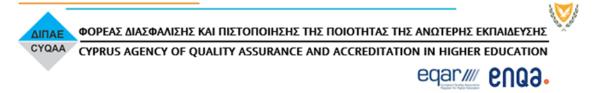*(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)*

Areas of improvement and recommendations

> 1.1 Matters of EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) could be explicitly embedded in QA procedures and in staff awareness, and should be considered in relation to student performance.
>
> 1.2 Although mechanisms for student evaluation of their programmes were described, we were not provided with examples of this evaluation, or evidence of actions taken as a result.
>
> 1.3 The Department and University could consider undertaking a student evaluation survey of their whole programme, to be enacted at the end of the degree being studied.
>
> 1.4 The Department should ensure that detailed assessment criteria for each piece of assessment is explicitly available to students in the course documentation.

Department's Response:

1.1 It is true that the University's quality assurance system only systematically examines issues of gender equality and gender matters when tracking student performance. The information tracked will be expanded to include matters like religious and ethnic background and inclusion information for sexual orientation and minorities. This is a matter assigned great importance by the University and ensuring the provision of an inclusive environment is central to its internationalization efforts. Frederick University has signed the Cyprus Diversity Charter and via the center of Professional and Personal Development at Frederick (PDF) already has setup a series of trainings and seminars related to EDI matters for academic staff (Annex 03). Similar trainings and seminars will be scheduled for the students as well. Additionally, the University's policies for equal opportunities and zero discrimination have been recently updated (Link).

1.2 And point 1.3

As per student evaluations, it is noted that students evaluate each course and each instructor at the end of every semester. The questionnaires (Annex 04 – Student

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Feedback Questionnaire) are collected after the instructor has posted the final grade and before the students know the results. Through requiring students to complete the questionnaire prior to viewing their grades we ensure a very high participation rates and the results are utilized by the Department for effective use. All responses are available to the evaluated instructors as well as the Chair of the Department. The quality assurance scheme at the University specifies actions depending on the results, for example, if grading is below a particular threshold the instructor must provide a report on remedial actions to address the problem and for second higher threshold, the matter must be discussed in the annual staff appraisal review. The University, as per the policy in its program review guidelines, used student focus groups to include the opinions of students for the program as a whole. However, the Department adopts the Committees suggestion and will introduce program-wide questionnaires for students to be used in the next programmatic review.

1.4   We agree with the Committee's suggestion that detailed assessment criteria must be available to students. In fact, this is done as the Course Outline (Annex 5) for each course offered is handed out to all students at the beginning of the course and contains detailed information on assessment ciriteria. Clearly, there is always room for improvement and the Department has decided that Course Outlines for the next academic semester are reviewed to ensure they explicitly provide assessment criteria at the appropriate detail.
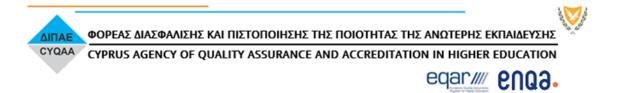
2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

2.1   The Department should ensure that detailed assessment criteria for each piece of assessment is explicitly available to students in the course documentation.

Department's Response:

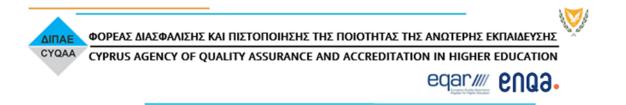2.1   Please refer to previous answer 1.4

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3. **Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)**

Areas of improvement and recommendations

> 3.1 The department could be more explicit about the contract status of its staff, particularly those who are employed on a part-time, "special teaching staff" status.
>
> 3.2 A more formal consideration of student evaluation of teaching staff could be considered, possibly even linking this to annual staff appraisal.
>
> 3.3 Although the Department has a very dedicated existing body of staff, it will need to carefully consider its future recruitment of staff in relation to EDI criteria and internationalization.

Department's Response:

3.1 We agree that, in order to ensure a positive and productive working environment, it is important that the contract status is clear for all employees. The "Special Teaching Staff" label is imposed by the governing law and regulations of the Cyprus QAA and it is needed to clearly distinguish between elected Teaching and Research Staff. A sample contract is provided in Annex 06.

3.2 We apologize for not making it evident in the evaluation visit, but student evaluations of teaching staff form part of the staff appraisal process as gradings are available to the Department Head and there is a policy to comment and react on 'problematic' and 'below expectations' markings. The matter has been reviewed in the Quality Assurance Committee and the policy has been updated to include in the appraisal process also high performing gradings in order to highlight and promote best practices

3.3 We fully agree that the future of the Department relies in internationalization, something that was discussed in depth during the visit. The Department already forms a strategy in order to internationalise its staff profile and its students through the increase of mobility via the Erasmus program, further involvement in EU-Conexus networks (Frederick University is an associate member of EU-Conexus European University for Smart Urban Coastal and Sustainability; (Link). Furthermore, international experience is a prerequisite for hiring new staff. The Department has already included internationalisation criteria at the call for visiting professors for the academic year 2021-22 (Link). Futhermore, as per the University's commitment to EDI,all programmes of

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the Department have been submitted for accreditation in the English language as well, which gives the opportunity of increasing our research networks and collaborations. These actions are fully inline with the University's strategic goal for Internationalization, Learning and Teaching.
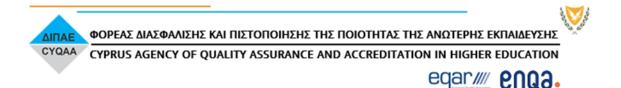
4. **Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**

Areas of improvement and recommendations

4.1 The Department should encourage more students to take advantage of the Erasmus scheme.

4.2 We support the moves being made to teach the MSc and the new PhD programme in both Greek and English. This has the potential to widen the range of international students taking the programme, and also to increase the international mobility and employability of graduates.

4.3 We support the moves being made to develop a community of alumni from this programme and others within the Department.

Department's Response:

4.1 We agree with the Committees recommendation, as we believe that students participation in mobility schemes enhances their learning experience. Increasing mobility for students, and staff, is one of the basic goals of the University. A few years ago Frederick University was honoured by the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes (IDEP) for its significant results and the continuous policy for student mobility. Due to the impact of COVID-19, student mobility was significantly reduced, but we are hopeful that starting the next academic year the mobility of students from and to our University will continue.

4.2 Please refer to answer 3.3 for the internalization efforts of the program.

4.3 We would like to thank the Committee for their support in our efforts to develop the alumni community. The creation of the alumni community is an effort of the past two years, as per the Rector's initiative for the creation of Alumni Associations in every Department. Due to Covid-19, the effort was held back but the Departments are continuing the development starting next academic year.

5. **Learning resources and student support**

Areas of improvement and recommendations

5.1	A greater diversity of students, including international students, would be welcome

Department's Response:

5.1   Please refer to answer 3.3 for the internalization efforts of the program.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

No further comments were made by the Committee

Concluding, we would like to sincerely thank the EEC for their dedicated work and invaluable comments provided both within their evaluation report and during the frank discussions held throughout the visit. We wish to note that we are particularly pleased with the very positive assessment in general of both the Department itself and the academic programs it operates.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	*Position*	*Signature*
Prof. George Demosthenous	Rector	

Date: 01/06/2021