Doc. 300.1.2

07.14.318.017

Higher Education Institution's Response

Conventional-face-to-face programme of study

Date:

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  Frederick University
- **Campus: Nicosia**
- **School: Business and Law**
- **Department / Sector: Law**
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

Programme

In Greek:

Νομική (3 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό (PhD))

In English:

Law (3 academic years, 180 ECTS, Doctorate (PhD)

Language(s) of instruction: English and Greek

- **Specializations (if any): -**

  In Greek: -

  In English: -

Programme's Status: Currently Operating

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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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. 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, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

  - *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.*

ΔΙΠΑΕ ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

Areas of improvement and recommendations

> 1.a. The number of PhD researchers who are expected to join the programme is not clearly defined.

Department's Response:

Based on the experience the University has with the rest of the Doctoral programs already running, the expected number of PhD Students is estimated to be around six (6) to ten (10) new students per year. The aim is to have one (1) new PhD students per faculty member per year, resulting in a total of three (3) to five (5) PhD students supervised by each faculty member in the long ran. It is noted that according to the "PhD Regulation" of the University" the maximum number of PhD students a faculty member can supervise at a time is limited to five (5).

> 1.b. The students' workload in the PhD in law programme appears to be excessive and may be, further, prove to be detrimental in the delivery of the thesis. The department suggested during the online meeting that the many ECTS required for the obtention of the PhD degree aimed to make sure that the PhD researchers received adequate training and wrote their thesis within a structured-research environment.

We would like to thank the EEC for their comment, but we would like to clarify that the PhD programme structure and workload is in accordance with the guidelines set by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and the Cyprus Qualification Framework (Link – Pg 29) which states *"Level 8 (Doctorate) degrees in the CyQF are awarded after a minimum of three years of a FT study"*.

Furthermore, the PhD programme has a discrete third-cycle feature in accordance with the 3-cycle Bologna Process Framework. Prospective students are expected to complete 30 ECTS per semester for a total of 180 ECTS to obtain the PhD qualification.

Furthermore, the PhD programme structure follows the Doctoral Studies Regulations of the University (Link) and adequately prepares the students for the delivery of their thesis via courses such as PHDL601 – Research Methods and Practices, PHDL701 – Research Planning etc. (please refer to Annex 1 – Programme Structure).

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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

> 2.a. The EEC found that the requirement to have two publications in peer reviewed journals in order to be granted to Doctorate degree, excessive and incompatible with standard practice in law. It recommends to remove it.

Department's Response:

We would like to thank the EEC for their comment and point out that this was one of the important factors taken into consideration when designing the programme. As per the University's Reasearch Strategic Plan to promote research culture in the University and internationalize the PhD Programme's research output, international publications are required in order to obtain a PhD title.

Although the General Doctorate Regulations of the University state that "The research work of the student must be published in at least **three** international refereed conferences or journals". (Link – Pg 13), when designing the programme the Department has opted for **two** publications for the PhD in Law. Out of those two publications, flexibility is offered where **only one** publication is required to be in international peer reviewed journals and the other could be for example (a) publication to a local or international journal, (b) presentation in refereed conferences etc.

We would like to retain the two publications requirement, as we believe innovative research and the promotion of new knowledge is the core foundation for any successful PhD Programme. This will be in accordance with other similar PhD programs offered by other universities. Furthermore, the requirement for publications will allow students develop the necessary soft skills and help them start building up their publication record, something useful for graduates interested in being employed in the academia. Finally, we believe that journal and/or conference publications are the main means for international dissemination of the research results achieved, as well as, they contribute significantly in the international visibility of the Program, the Department and the University.

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> 2.b. The EEC found that the PhD programme was rather 'teaching-loaded'. The 180 ECTS that need to be acquired to receive the degree were considered to be too many and leave little freedom to PhD researchers to pursue their research.

Department's Response:

We would like to thank the EEC for their comment, but we would like to clarify that the PhD programme structure and workload is in accordance with the with the guidelines set by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and the Cyprus Qualification Framework (Link – Pg 29) which states *"Level 8 (Doctorate) degrees in the CyQF are awarded after a minimum of three years of a FT study"*.

Furthermore, it is noted that out of the 180 ECTS of the program, only 28 ECTS of them are allocated to courses with a taught component. These 28 ECTS (almost equivalent to the workload of one semester) are allocated to four (4) courses related to research methods and special legal topic courses related to the topic of the research of each student. According to the program structure these courses are scheduled in the first year of study. The rest of the ECTS are allocated to the actual research component of the program, identified as courses/activities related to the preparation and approval of the research proposal, the implementation of the proposed research, the preparation and publication of the required papers, and the writing and defense of the PhD Thesis.

> 2.c. The courses to be offered on 'Advanced legal topics' will be designed based on demand/ the topics the PhD students pursue. It is doubtful whether a sufficient number of PhD students will pursue research in the same research area, to allow for a seminar to be built around that. If the programme wants to start already in September 2022, the curricula for these courses will, most likely, not be ready yet. Additional funding for participation in international conferences would be welcomed.

Department's Response:

We would like to thank the EEC for their comment and apologize for not making it clearer during the evaluation. The courses Advanced legal topics are not courses with predesigned structure that imply the existence of a predefined curriculum for them to be offered.

Advanced Legal Topics courses can be taught courses, offered by other relevant programmes of the University. Students may, replace up to two of the Advance Topics courses with graduate level courses offered by other universities or research institutions, as well as courses for PhD students organized by actions/programs, such as the COST actions or relevant Network of Excellence (NoE) programs. In such a case, the level and content of the course must be equivalent to a seven ECTS postgraduate level course.

Advanced Legal Topics courses can be replaced by directed study / research courses, after the suggestion of the student's Research Advisor in consultation with the student's Research Advisory Committee. In such a case, the Research Advisor must provide the student with an outline of the work to be done and the expected outcome.

2.d. Additional funding for participation in international conferences would be welcomed.

Department's Response:

The University has already in place a funding scheme that supports the participation in international conferences. Through this scheme, each department is allocated an annual budget that is used by the department to finance conference participation. Furthermore, each faculty member has a personal research account, financed by funds obtained by externally funded research programs. Faculty member can utilize the funds from their research account to support their research work, including funding the participation to conferences, if this is not covered by the departmental funding or the funding explicitly provided for this purpose by the externally funded research projects.

Finally, the University has in place an annual Internal Research Funding scheme, where faculty members submit their research proposals for internal funding, which primarily covers conference participation expenses, publishing fees, networking visits abroad etc.

The University considers the participation of its faculty to international conferences as one of the main means international visibility and recognition. To this end it is working on establishing other complementary schemes, which will encourage and enable the participation and the presentation of research results in international conferences, as well as the publication in conference proceedings and refereed journals.

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

> 3.a. We recommend greater transparency in the recruitment of staff, including non-permanent staff. More sabbaticals for teachers will help research and teaching.

Department's Response:

Department's Response:

The University already has procedures in place for the evaluation of its academic staff. As per the Mission, the Regulation and Rules and of the University, the academic staff are evaluated based on four (4) pillars:

(1) Teaching, (2) Research, (3) Administrative Work, (4) Contribution to society.

These procedures are publicly available at the University's website (Link) and indicate specific criteria for the evaluation for each rank. These criteria include publications in peer reviewed journals, funded research projects, international recognitions, doctoral studies supervision, contribution in teaching and administrative work of the University, professional achievements and social contribution.

The University's Council has decided to further expand and specify the evaluation criteria and at the 150th Senate Meeting, after a first discussion the suggested framework of evaluation of each pillar was:

Teaching

- Student evaluation reports for the last 3 years
- Educational material that has been developed since the last evaluation
- Samples of two (2) detailed course descriptions
- Presentation of a sample course on the online learning platform
- Participation in training programmes
- Design and development of innovative courses

Research

- Total number of publications
- Number of scientific publications since the last evaluation
- Percentage of publications submitted, that appear in international databases (eg. Scopus, Web of Science)
- Number of Citations
- Scientific recognition
- Research Work Autonomy
- Research projects
- Funding
- Laboratories
- Doctoral Student Supervision
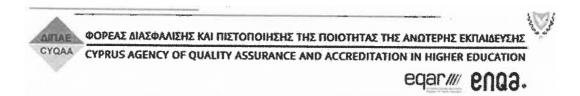- Creating / leading a research team

Administrative Work

- Election to an academic position such as Head, Dean etc
- Participation in Senate / Council Committees
- Participation in Departmental Committees
- Committee Chair
- Program of Study Coordinator
- Participation in the planning and submission of a new programme of study
- Participation in the design and delivery of training programmes
- Participation in activities for the development of the University

Social Contribution

- Participation and planning of programmes and actions for the society
- Representation of the University in National Committees
- Representation of Cyprus in European and Internaional Committees
- Organizing events, open to the public
- Commons Participation (ex. Non-scientific articles, media presence etc).

Non-permanent academic staff is selected by public calls at the University's website (Link). For all non permament staff who are PhD Holders, apply the same evaluation criteria as with the permanent staff. For non permanent staff who are not PhD Holders, evaluation is made based on their professional expertise and teaching capabilities. All candidates who meet the selection criteria are ranked and a staff registry, for each course, is created.

Additionally, the University offers the opportunity for all academic staff to apply for a sabbatical leave as per the Research and Teaching Staff Rule. (Please refer to Annex 2). The Senate has approved all applications for sabbatical leave so far, as we believe that this opportunity indeed offers a great opportunity for academics to further enhance their research

collaborations and expertise. The Department of Law has yet to apply for any sabbatical leaves, as they academic personel felt the need to properly help the development of the Department and support it, during the evaluations of the new programmes of study.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

(ESG 1.4)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

> 4.a. The EEC understands that the PhD regulation provided is the general regulation applied at the University, however, it is worth clarifying in the context of the PhD programme whether Master degrees in areas other than law, would still allow a student to pursue a PhD in law.

Department's Response:

The main requirement of admission is a Master relevant to the field of Law. Applicants who do not hold their Master's degree at the time of application, but will hold such a degree before the commencement of the doctoral program, are also eligible to apply but must submit a letter from their University's Registrar verifying that they are indeed eligible to graduate. The decision on their admission does not become official until the degree has been successfully produced.

Each application for admission should include:

- A completed application form.
- A Curriculum Vitae indicating the student's education, academic and research experience, any publications, awards, etc.
- A Research Statement. Candidates with prior graduate studies are required to submit a brief research statement (up to 600 words) stating the area in which they are interested in conducting research.
- At least two letters of recommendation from academic or professional advisors.
- Certified copies of all degrees and transcripts.
- Copies of any other supporting material, such as exams, honors, awards, etc.
- Proof of language proficiency.

The application material must be submitted in the language of instruction of the Program (English or Greek).

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All applications for admission are evaluated by the Doctoral Program Committee.

The criteria for the evaluation of the candidates are the following:

- Academic background
- Research background
- Recommendation letters
- Additional qualifications
- Personal interview.

After completing the evaluation process, the Doctoral Program Committee submits to the Council of the Department a Program Admission Evaluation Report on its decision. This report includes a justified suggestion of the Committee on the acceptance/rejection of the candidate's application, possible conditions for admission, transfer credits, and research area. If appropriate, the Committee may suggest in this report the Research Advisor and the members of the Research Advisory Committee

In the cases where applications from candidates with Master Degrees in areas other than Law are submitted (such Political Sciences etc), the Doctoral Programme Committee may accept the application with the provision that the applicant will attend a number of Master level courses from the Department's Master programmes prior to his enrolment in the PhD Programme.

> 4.b.   In a similar vein, more details on the PhD qualifying exam, would be welcomed.

The purpose of the PhD Qualifying Exam is to ensure that the student has the required background knowledge, as well as specialized knowledge to conduct research in his dissertation area and to cope with the requirements of the doctoral program.

The PhD Qualifying Exam consists of two parts. The first one examines the student's broad knowledge on topics related to the field of law at the undergraduate level, as well as his ability to reason, formulate and solve problems, and to apply analytical skills. The second part examines the student's depth of knowledge in the area of his research at the graduate course level. The duration for each part of the exam is from 1½ to 2½ hours

The content of the PhD Qualifying Exam is decided by the Research Advisory Committee of the student. The student must be informed in writing about the form of the qualifying exam and the reading material, at least ten weeks before the date of the qualifying exam.

The PhD Qualifying Exam is graded as either "Pass" or "Fail". A student passes the PhD Qualifying Exam if he/she gets a passing grade for both parts of the exam. A student who fails the PhD Qualifying Exam is permitted a second and final examination. In such a case the student must register for the PhD Qualifying Exam in the semester that follows the semester of the first examination. Failure in the second examination will result in the permanent removal of the student from the doctoral program.

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5. Learning resources and student support

(ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

> 5.a. While the library is generally well-resourced, the EEC recommended that it further acquires access to the NOMOS database, which will be particularly interesting for students specialising in Greek law, and the Kluwer law database for those that work on EU and international law.

Department's Response:

Frederick University gains access to academic electronic resources through its membership to the Consortium of Academic Libraries of Cyprus (CALC). The University has already requested from CALC to participate in the consortium subscription for NOMOS and Kluwer Law Journals which will be available to us in the coming academic year.

> 5.b. The EEC further recommended the development of a Department-centred alumni network.

Department's Response

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.

Records are hold for all of alumni in the department's programmes, and an alumni meeting is planned as early as next academic semester

6. Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

6.a.   none

Department's Response:

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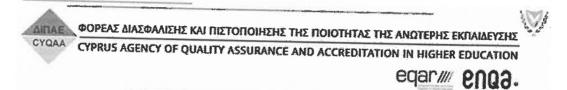
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7. Conclusions and final remarks

> **7.a.** Overall, the EEC was **impressed** with the quality of the existing and planned programmes. The EEC believes that both the LL.M in public law and the Ph.D programmes are relevant programmes that will attract students from Cyprus and Greece. The Ph.D programme, the University aims to launch, is in line with the University's vision to develop its research branch. As provided in the report, the EEC appreciated very much the design of all programmes, the teaching staff and their teaching methods, the University's resources and the processes for continuous quality control. The few remarks for improvements it made throughout the report should be perceived as mere suggestions as to how to potentially improve some minor issues pertaining to the students' entry requirements, the intensity of the Ph.D programme and the transparency in the recruitment process..

Department's Response:

The Department of Law wishes to express its gratitude to the members of the External Evaluation Committee for their thorough and insightful evaluation of the Department and its programmes as well as their fruitful comments and constructive discussion. The accreditation process provided the opportunity to the Department and the Program Coordinators to obtain the objective views of external and independent peers, as well as examine aspects of the program from a different perspective. The Department has already considered the issues raised, as well as the recommendations of the EEC and has already acted upon, in terms of implementing the Committee's recommendations as shown in sections 1 to 6.

The Department also wishes to thank the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, as well as the members of staff of the Agency that facilitated the organisation and implementation of the External Evaluation Committee's visit.

B. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Prof. George Demosthenous	Rector	