



Doc. 300.1.2

07.14.318.065

Higher Education Institution's Response

Conventional-face-to-face programme of study

Date: Date

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

Programme

In Greek:

Επιστήμες Υγείας (3 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό (PhD))

In English:

Health Sciences (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



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, 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.a. There are internal and external assessors in the various quality control systems of the programme. However, quality assurance at the point of completion of the thesis requires attention.

Department's Response:

Doctoral candidates are expected to acquire specific knowledge and skills in the research methods and carry out innovative and original research being exposed to challenging research questions. They also should develop a more scientific and evidence-based point of view in Health Sciences through their overall course in the doctoral studies programme and the interaction with other PhD candidates, faculty members, external visiting researchers and academics.

According to Doctoral Studies Regulation (Annex 01) of the University, the Doctoral Program Committee of the Department has the overall responsibility of the quality assurance of the doctoral program. Each doctoral student is assigned a three member Research Advising Committee that has the responsibility to oversee the progression of the student throughout his/her studies and research work. The final research outcome of each PhD candidate is assessed by a five member Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation Committee. At-least two of the members of this committee are external examiners. The requirements for the successful completion of a doctoral program are disseminated both to the PhD candidates and the Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation Committee (examiners) from the Doctoral Program Committee sharing the Doctoral Studies Regulation of the University.

In order to ensure the quality of Doctoral thesis and enhance guidance given to Doctoral candidates and compliance with Doctoral regulations, the PhD Thesis Writing Guidelines (Annex 02) were revised to adopt the recommendations of the EEC. Furthermore, the Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation Form (Annex 03) and the PhD Thesis Requirements Checklist (Annex 04) were also revised in order to address the issues raised by the EEC.

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

2.a. PhD students could have more opportunities than is available now to teach in the bachelor programme to increase their skills in pedagogy and synthesizing knowledge.

The evaluation is open and the evaluation criteria are known. However, some of the dissertations did not meet the international dissertation criteria and we questioned the quality of the final product. The structure was inadequate in places. Some PhD theses lacked an assessment of reliability or ethics. Some also lacked a full discussion chapter as would normally be expected, especially when a clinical issue has been explored. Some also lacked a coherent 'plot' which will weaken their impact on improving practice. There is room for improvement in the evaluation of dissertations and the implications for healthcare in Cyprus.

Department's Response:

The University encourages the involvement of doctoral students in teaching through a teaching assistance scheme, and indeed a significant number of doctoral students are employed as teaching assistance. However, this is not compulsory for all doctoral students and is not considered as a graduation requirement.

Concerning the improvement of the quality of research this will be addressed by placing more emphasis at the early stages of the research work, and more specifically through the presentation of the research proposal (Course Research Planning and Research Proposal - PHDHS115) where the student's Research Advisory Committee will examine in more detail the novelty and motivation for the proposed research work, the proposed methodology and the literature review, ensuring that international research standards are met. The student's research advisor will have the responsibility of ensuring that the standards approved in the research proposal are met. The compliance to these standards will be evaluated by the Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation Committee during the defence of the Thesis and reported in the revised Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation Form (Annex 03). As far as the quality, structure and content of the Thesis report is



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concerned, as mentioned in *section 1a* above with the revised PhD Thesis Writing Guidelines (Annex 02) and the Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation Form (Annex 03).

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

3.a. There was not much evidence of joint research projects. The unit could benefit from a thematic research programme and close research collaboration both within the unit and with teachers from other departments of the university. At present the impression is that research is rather random.

Department's Response:

The University through its Research Strategy has put forward the organization of the researchers in research units or research labs, oriented towards specific research thematic areas. This has already been adopted by most of the Departments with very good results observed in relation to the number and quality research proposals submitted for external funding, the success is attracting external research funding and the volume of research publications produced.

Such a research unit already been established is the "Public Health and Biotechnology" unit which is a cooperation between the Health Department and the Department of Pharmacy. Two more research units are under development. These are the "Intellectual Disabilities Research Laboratory" and the "Emergency Health Care Research Laboratory".

3.b. There was a notable lack of expertise in social sciences (such as sociology and health psychology) which would strengthen the faculty further. We also noted a lack of expertise in qualitative research.

Department's Response:

We have adopted the recommendation of the External Evaluation Committee. The Department programmes are further enhanced by both social scientists and qualitative research both from the University and visiting staff, offering their specialized knowledge and expertise in the courses taught.

Specifically, the Department programmes are supported by the following two faculty members of the Department of Psychology and Social Work:

- Dr [Erodotou Stylianos](#), who teaches Courses in **Sociology, Philosophy** and in other Social Sciences at Frederick University.
- Dr [Panayiotou Andreas](#), with the Specialization in **Sociology**, teaching in Psychology and Social Sciences Department of Frederick University.

Furthermore, the following three professors from other universities will be employed as visiting professors by the Department (Please refer to Annex 05 for the staff recruitment confirmations and CVs):

- Professor [Jelastopoulou Eleni](#), with the Specialization in **Epidemiology and Research Methodology, Professor, University of Patras.**
- [Professor Charalampos Economou](#) specialized in **Sociology and Health Policies, Professor, Panteion University.**
- [Dr Petros Galanis](#), specialized in **Public Health and Research Methodology., Assistant Professor, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.**

It is noted that all of the above faculty members have expertise in qualitative research methods, and will contribute in enhancing the research produced by the doctoral students and include both quantitative as well as qualitative research.

3.c. The institution could benefit from a clearer research programme arranged under themes, which could be continuously strengthened by the theses, publications and research interests of bachelor, master and doctoral students

Department's Response:

As mentioned in *Section 3a* the University promotes the organization of the researchers in research units or research labs, oriented towards specific research thematic areas. This has already been adopted by most of the Departments with very good results observed in relation to the number and quality research proposals submitted for external funding, the success is attracting external research funding and the volume of research publications produced.

Such a research unit already been established is the “Public Health and Biotechnology” unit which is a cooperation between the Health Department and the Department of Pharmacy. Two more research units are under development. These are the “Intellectual Disabilities Research Laboratory” and the “Emergency Health Care Research Laboratory”.

3.d. The department could benefit from having more experts in qualitative research and to engage them in research projects. Qualitative research methods are taught only at a basic level and further development is required from experienced faculty.

Department’s Response:

As mentioned in section 3b above, the Department will be supported by two faculty members from the Department of Psychology and Social Work, as well as three visiting professors who have expertise in qualitative research. The above mentioned academics will assist the Department in teaching courses, such as the courses related to research methods, in participating in research programs, as well as in participating in the supervision of doctoral students.



4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Areas of improvement and recommendations

4.a. Monitoring of student teaching is in place but progress processes could be clearer in terms of quality assessment of the final thesis. See also previous points.

Department's Response:

Please refer to previous answers on Section 1a and Section 2a.

5. Learning resources and student support

(ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

5.a. Based on discussions with the students critical reflecting skills could be enhanced at all levels of education. This is especially important at doctoral level when critical thinking is being developed.

Department's Response:

PhD courses often include critical reflection based projects. The projects can take different forms, everything from a reflective essay to a video presentation, a digital portfolio or a blog post. discussions can include describing how a critical experience in your life shapes the world view, making connections between learnings and workplace practice, analysing your experience of working on a group project or evaluating a teaching or learning activity.

In some courses the assignment includes the connection of a research article with a lesson and analysis - discussion on it, presenting it to the class in PPT and being evaluated both by the student, the instructor and other students (self and peer evaluation). In In this way, critical thinking is developed and the students' intuition on a subject turns into deep knowledge.

We also encompass a set of abilities that students use to examine their own thinking and that of others, during the teaching process. This involves making judgments based on reasoning, where students consider options, analyse options using specific criteria, and draw conclusions.

5.a. We recommend that research is focused on themes that reflect the interests and strengths of the faculty alongside a clear research strategy and objectives that will be established for the unit

Department's Response:

Please refer to previous answers on Section 3a and Section 3c.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

6.a. The research plan for the dissertation and the guidelines for writing the dissertation are currently inadequate. They should cover the thesis requirements in more detail. The dissertations we examined were relevant in terms of topics, but quality was very variable, and the content did not in all respects meet the requirements of scientific writing at doctoral level. This is especially important if the numbers are to be expanded in the future.

Department's Response:

Please refer to previous answers on Section 1a and Section 2a.

6.a. As a rule, each doctoral student has one supervisor. It is not clear how students can request a change of supervisor should this be necessary. Two external reviewers and three internal reviewers are used for the evaluation of the completed dissertation. This seems unusually high number given the problems we encountered in some of the thesis provided. The instructions and evaluation reports on thesis quality should be reviewed to address the inadequacies mentioned above.

Department's Response:

According to Doctoral Studies Regulation (Annex 01) of the University, a doctoral student can request a change of Research Advisor. This request is addressed by the Doctoral Program Committee of the Department. The Doctoral Program Committee decides on this request based on the reasons for which the student requests the change, the stage/level of the student in the program, and whether the student will continue on the same research topic or not. In the case that the student wishes to change the area of research as well, then there is a possibility that the student must repeat some of the courses already completed (Special Topics, Research Proposal etc). If the student wishes to continue on the same research topic,



then, according to the level of the contribution of the Research Advisor in the research already completed, a consent by the Research Advisor is requested.

As far as comment on the Dissertation Evaluation Committee is concerned, it is noted that it is common practice to have five members in this committee with at least *two external* members. Keeping the number of examiners to five will contribute in the quality of the research work produced.

7. Conclusions and final remarks

7.a. Frederick University, School of Health Sciences, Department of Nursing is responsible for bachelor's, master's and doctoral education. The university **has good quality assessment methods, a clear mission and vision**, and the unit under assessment is in line with the university's strategy. The unit's educational programmes are generally up-to-date and the **learning environment is excellent**. A particular strength of the unit is the scientific orientation of the teachers (all have PhDs), the good team spirit and the highly student centred teaching. Students have excellent support systems and very personalised support at all levels of education. Practical training is based on theory and science. Students are satisfied with the education they receive and many go on to study for masters and doctorates in the same unit after their undergraduate degree. **Teaching resources are excellent** and it was welcome that they had considered sustainable development goals to protect the environment. It would be good to see more of this across the different programmes in Health Sciences. It is important to maintain a good ratio of permanent and visiting teachers. Practical training and theoretical teaching are mutually supportive. A clear area for improvement is the PhD dissertation requirements, the implementation of which needs to be monitored more closely. In addition, the EEC recommends that the unit could have a research programme under specific research themes based on the expertise of the faculty where students at different levels of education could also participate in relevant research projects. In this way, the unit will strengthen its own level of expertise and knowledge and its reputation would be enhanced. Staff are motivated and enthusiastic about their work and were very welcoming and open to suggestions. The unit was well prepared for the evaluation and the necessary information was at hand. The unit has excellent opportunities to develop and become more competitive.

Department's Response:

The Department of Nursing 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

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Prof. George Demoshenous Rector

Date: 14/09/2022

