

Doc. 300.1.2

07.14.318.071

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: *Date.*

- **Higher Education Institution:**

FREDERICK UNIVERSITY

- **Town: Nicosia / Limassol**

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

In Greek:

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

In English:

Social Sciences (3 academic years, 180 ECTS, Doctorate (PhD))

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

- **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.300.1.1) 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)

Findings for PhD Social Sciences

1.1 The broad labelling of the program, should be social work, and the orientation should be more specialized, becoming a reference in areas like resilience, children and social policies within Southern European States.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD Social Sciences

1.2 Attractiveness for students from Greek or abroad

1.3 Academic Profile

Department's Response

1.1 The Department accepts the Committee's recommendation of providing more narrow focused labels (names) for its MA and PhD programs. Specifically, the programs' names are modified as follows, as per the Committee's recommendations and discussions during the evaluation visit:

- **MA in Social Work and Social Administration.** This reflects the emphasis and focus on the social work dimension of the program
- **PhD in Social Work, Social Policy and Administration:** The name clearly reflects the focused scope of research interest in social work as well as the links with social policy and practice, as recommended by the Committee.

1.2 The Department applies an effective strategy of attracting high-quality students from Cyprus and abroad. The committee has raised the issue of the low number on several occasions, both during our discussions as well as in their Report. During our discussions, this issue was associated to a certain extent with their suggestion that the Department, and especially the Social Work programs (BA and MA), should expand to attract non-

Cypriot students. In this context, the members referred to the possibility of introducing classes in English.

The Social Work academic programs at Frederick University are pioneers in Cyprus. These programs were the first programs introduced, established, and still running in the Republic of Cyprus. Social Work, like other social sciences, has suffered significantly during the past decade due to the economic crisis, but also, as we emphasized in our discussions with the Committee, from the slow process of institutionalization of the profession of Social Work. *In this context, the Department's study programs are just recovering from the low level of student enrollments in the middle of the past decade.*

The matter of sustainability has been discussed in depth with the University management and we are happy to note that we have the full backing of administration to maintain and grow the Social Work programs offered. There is a clear commitment that, unlike other universities, we will not terminate the programs and we expect sustainable growth in the coming years; this is also expressed with the approval of new positions in the specific field.

In relation to offering the programs in English, we believe that this is not the first priority as, given the fees of the program, it will not be easy to attract international students at first. However, the Department is working with the University management to support its efforts for internationalization. Our first priority for program development is offering the master program through distance learning or blended learning, which we believe, will help us attract a significant number of student.

It is further noted that we are progressively noticing a small but consistent increase of new recruits in the Social Work programs over the past couple of years, and we are confident that with the Department growth and the various remedial actions described we expect to have a sustainable increase in the Department's student numbers.

Regarding the Evaluation point below,

		Bachelor of Social Work	MA	Phd
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant

We believe that the 'non-compliant' assessment for this section relates to the title of the program as no comments were raised by the committee, either in the report or during the visit, relating to our design, monitoring and review procedures. We have fully adopted the recommendations of the Committee with respect to the name/label and we therefore believe that the assessment must be changed. Specifically, the new suggested program title is **PhD in Social Work, Social Policy and Administration**: The name clearly reflects the focused scope of research interest in social work as well as the links with social policy and practice, as recommended by the Committee

1.3 The program's academic profile is clearly defined. We believe that what the Committee is referring to is the academic support for the program, something that has been addressed through the focused recruits made in the field of Social work.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

No comments or suggestions were made by the committee members

3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD

3.1 Gain focus – relabel to social work

3.2 More Students are needed

3.3 Full Professor in Social Work is needed

Department's Response

3.1 Please refer to answer 1.1, Pg. 3

3.2 Please refer to answer 1.2 Pg. 3

3.3 After detailed analysis of all the comments raised by the EEC, the Department has decided to announce a position for a senior rank (Full Professor) in the field of Social Work with application deadline 05 April 2021. (Please refer to Annex 01 - Social Work Vacancy).

For immediate remedial action, the Department has employed two academics with Social Work specialization:

- Professor Theodoros Sakelaropoulos, with specialization in Social Policy, as a Professor in the Department. Prof. Sakelaropoulos will not only assist the Department in an academic domain that the Committee suggested strengthening but is expected to assist significantly in research development and attraction of research funds.
- Professor Agapi Kanduylaki, with specialization in Social Work and Multiculturalism as a Visiting Professor. Prof. Kandylaki will collaborate in the development of the PhD Program and the expansion of research activities in the Department, both in terms of publications as well as in terms of attracting research funding.

Both academics will commence employment from the Fall 2021 semester. Their CVs are provided in Annex 02.1 and Annex 02.2 of the response.

Additionally, the Department has decided to renew the announcement ([Link](#)) for the a Teaching and Research Staff position in Social Work for senior positions (Professor or Associate Professor) as the prior announcement became barren due to lack of applications. (application deadline, 31st August 2021)

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

No comments or suggestions were made by the committee members

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

No comments or suggestions were made by the committee members

6. Additional for doctoral learning programmes

(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 6.1 Benchmarking and choosing a model to follow.
- 6.2 Changing the label of the Program to social work.
- 6.3 Creating good international networks and apply with winning applications to international research funding (e.g. Marie Curie).

Department's Response:

- 6.1 As indicated by the Committee, the doctoral program is still in its infancy and as a Department, we assign particular importance to this area. As discussed, a doctoral program is crucial for increasing the research capacity and output of the Department. The School regulation for PhD programs specifies benchmarks in relation to quantifiable research output to progress between stages of the PhD as well as publication targets. The model applied for the program is mature enough given that it is the same used by the School of Education and Social Sciences and has been applied for several years by the Department of Education with remarkable results. (Annex 03 – PhD Regulations)
- 6.2 We have adopted the Committee's recommendation. Please refer to answer 1.1
- 6.3 The department is constantly seeking and building international collaboration networks. In this context we have begun communications with the PSA (Psychological Science Accelerator) aiming in establishing a new collaboration with this network. The Psychological Science Accelerator is a globally distributed network of psychological science laboratories (currently over 500), representing over 70 countries on all six populated continents, that coordinates data collection for democratically selected studies.

The Department has also established a collaboration with the WPRN (World Pandemic Research Network) where we have not only the opportunity to partner in research with other institutions/ research centers but also to disseminate our own research and increase the visibility of the research that is carried out in our Department.

Furthermore, we are closing the finalization of an MOU with Democretus University of Thrace concentrating on research collaboration, joint research proposals and exchange of student and staff. This will clearly further help the department in terms of expanding its collaboration network and research production. The collaboration is of particular interest for our Department as Democretus University operates the only university department for social work in Greece and we expect it will greatly assist our engagement in research collaborations and internationalization.

Finally, as noted in answer 3.3 of this response, the faculty has been enriched with experienced professors in the field of Social Work and Social Policy with particular focus on research development, something that will invariably lead to improvement of our research collaborations and publication record.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

1. The increase of numbers in all study programmes is essential to further development.
2. More research is needed to promote evidence-based teaching.
3. The internalisation of the curriculum seems to be important to recruit students from abroad

Department's Response

1. Please refer to answer 1.2.
2. We agree with the Committee's recommendation to increase the research output of the faculty members of the Department. This is something that had already been identified in the Department and remedial actions were taken as well as new actions, as listed below. The PhD program is central to achieving this goal as it provides the best mechanism for research production and integration in the teaching process

The University has established an internal funding scheme for research. We are happy to note that in its first call, two proposals from the Department as coordinators and one proposal with Department faculty as collaborators, were successful and we hope that

this funding would prove as seeding for further grant attraction and, as a result, reputable publications

As noted in answer 3.3 of this response, the faculty has been enriched with experienced professors in the field of Social Work and Social Policy with particular focus on research development, something that will invariably lead to improvement of our publication record

The Department has developed clear targets for publication expectations in terms of both quantity and quality. In particular, publications in journals/proceedings tracked by internationally accepted aggregators, such as Scopus, are given strong priority.


The Department will form its first research unit, the Research Center on Resilience, which we hope will become a defining characteristic of our Psychology and Social Work programs and will bring international research collaborations to the Department.

We wish to point out that some of these actions already started bearing fruits. Specifically, we would like to note that since 2018 department faculty members have published 55 peer-reviewed journal publications and presented their work in 45 peer reviewed international conference proceedings. This has been a significant improvement compared to the previous period and indicates the dedication and focus of the Department to this direction. Importantly, we believe that the committee may not have noticed this since the information presented in the application was outdated, given the gap of more than two years between application submission and evaluation. Having said that, we accept that further emphasis should be given to high caliber publications with international impact, something discussed during the evaluation visit. Important pillar of the Research Policy of the University, was the introduction of several research and innovation KPIs and the call towards departments to adopt the most relevant to their research work, forcing the use of certain core KPIs for all departments. Furthermore, short-term and longer-term targets are set by the Departments for improvement of the selected KPIs and consequently the advancement of the research and innovation activities.

Finally, we would like to thank the Committee for their invaluable recommendations and hard work. We believe we have addressed the points raised and we are looking forward to the blossoming of the PhD program with the improvements made.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. George Demosthenous	Rector	

Date: 01/06/2021

