

Doc. 300.1.2

07.14.318.073

**Higher Education Institution's  
Response**

Date: Date.

- **Higher Education Institution:**

**FREDERICK UNIVERSITY**

- **Town: Limassol**

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

**In Greek:**

Κοινωνικός Σχεδιασμός και Ανάπτυξη Κοινωνικών Προγραμμάτων (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ (MA))

**In English:**

Social Planning and Development of Social Programmes (3 academic semesters, 90 ECTS, Master (MA))

- **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)

### ***Areas of improvement and recommendations for Master Social Planning and Development of Social Programs***

- 1.1 Internationalization of the curriculum (exchange of students, English parts of curriculum)
- 1.2 Attractiveness for students from Greek or abroad
- 1.3 Academic Profile
- 1.4 Orientation of Students to research problematics in which the school wants to be internationally recognized.

#### **Department's Response:**

- 1.1 We agree with the Committee that as the Department grows emphasis should be placed on internationalization efforts and aim for reaching a broader audience. Clearly, for this the offering of the programs of study in the English language is a prerequisite and this is something we aim introducing in the near future; as discussed with the Committee. It is not prudent to do so immediately. We reiterate that the broader issue of internationalization rests in part with the University's strategic plan and general policy to open up programs of study to other markets.

Specifically, our Department's strategy forms as follows:

**Period 2021-22:** Stabilizing both the BA and MA programs with a local student pool that will deem them viable and sustainable. In this period, we are only beginning to develop our Ph.D. program, which will increase recognition in society and start getting noticed internationally – especially Greece. During this time, and after considering the committee's suggestion, we will strengthen the Department's English dimension – more on this, see below.

**Period 2022-25:** In this timeframe, we will try to expand the programs on a more international level and local communities in need of Social Work professionals [e.g., migrants, excluded social groups]. On the first level, we will increase our efforts for more

research publications in English. At the same time, more bibliographies in English will be suggested, especially in MA and Ph.D. Programs. Our efforts will also focus on the possibility of offering our Ph.D. program in English.

One dimension which we think will help start the opening-up process is the Erasmus program. In late January 2021, our Department established a new Erasmus collaboration with the B.Sc. in Psychology program of the Mykolo Romerio Universitetas/Mykolas Romeris University in Lithuania. In general, there are already some courses in English concerning Erasmus students. These will be expanded, and a new dimension of this expansion will be offering Social Work Electives in English for other programs of study of the University itself.

- 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.

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.

1.4 We agree with the Committee that orientation of students in the areas of research focus relevant to the program will be helpful as it will assist students to better understand the research areas of interest and allow them to engage through their thesis work. This will be achieved through specialized research seminars that will be held every semester within which the various research targets the department engages in our explained, thus allowing the students to be appropriately immersed and gain the necessary orientation for their research.

Regarding the evaluation point below,

		<b>Bachelor of Social Work</b>	<b>MA</b>	<b>Phd</b>
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant	<b>Non-compliant</b>	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, as per the recommendations of the Committee the new suggested program title is **MA in Social Work and Social Administration**. This reflects the emphasis and focus on the social work dimension of the program

## 2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

### ***Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA***

2.1 English courses should be part of the study program in the future.

2.1 Please refer to our answer in 1.1. Furthermore, we iterate that our intention is to expand the program's reach beyond the local confines the language and current recruitment efforts. Our plans are that in the near future the program will be redesigned and offered in Distance-Learning/blended mode in the English language, in line with the recommendation. This requires a separate evaluation process, as per the current CYQAA regulations.

## 3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

### ***Findings for Master in Social Planning and Development of social programmes***

3.1 The first semester, which is fully taught by visiting scholars, seems to somewhat disengaged from the rest of the programme.

### ***Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA***

3.2 Gain focus – relabel to social work

3.3 More students are needed

3.4 Full Professor in Social Work is needed

**Department's Response:**

3.1 We believe there was a misunderstanding by the Committee, as only one (1) course in the whole program is co-taught by Visiting Faculty. As shown in Table 1 below (abstract from table 2 of the programme application), the 1<sup>st</sup> semester consists of 3 compulsory courses.

**Table 1**

1st Semester Courses

	<b>Course Type</b>	<b>Course Code</b>	<b>Course Name</b>
1.	Compulsory	MSCP501	Psychosocial And Community Interventions In Crisis Situations
2.	Compulsory	MSCP502	Social Planning and Programme Evaluation
3.	Compulsory	MSCP503	Strategical Administration of Social Services And Supervision

Out of those three courses of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester, two (2) of them (MSCP502, MSCP503) are taught by permanent Research and Teaching Staff (ΔΕΠ) of the University; Dr Demetris Hadjiharalambous and Dr Panayiota Christodoulou, with the relevant scientific domains.

The course MSC501 is co-taught by 2 Visiting Professors (Prof. Anastasia Alevriadou and Prof. Demetris Karayiannis) who enrich the program with their specialized knowledge and expertise. More specifically, this is the only course of the whole program (one (1) out of eight (8) programme courses) that is taught by Visiting staff, while the rest are exclusively taught by the University's Research and Teaching Staff.

3.2 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.

3.3 Please refer to answer 1.3.

3.4 After detailed analysis of all the comments raised by the EEC, the Department decided to announce a position for a senior rank (Full Professor) in the field of Social Work, with application deadline 05 April 2021. (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, 31<sup>st</sup> 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**

### 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. We agree with the Committee and efforts are made towards this, as explained in part of our response
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 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 3.4 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.

3. Please refer to answer 1.1.

### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Prof. George Demosthenous	Rector	

Date: 01/06/2021

