

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 02/07/2021

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
European University Cyprus

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

“Επιστήμες της Αγωγής: Ειδική και Ενιαία Εκπαίδευση (2 Έτη /120 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό)” – Εξ Αποστάσεως

In English:

“Education Sciences: Special and Inclusive Education (2 Years /120 ECTS, Master of Arts)” E-Learning

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek and English
- **Program's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



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 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the program 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 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 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

The Department of Education Sciences of European University Cyprus and the Coordinator of Education Sciences: Special and Inclusive Education (MA)-E-Learning Program wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the evaluation of this program of studies.

It is with great pleasure that the Coordinator, the Department and the School of Humanities, Social and Education Sciences noted the positive feedback of the EEC and we highly appreciate its insightful recommendations, which provided us with the opportunity to further improve the quality and implementation of the program. In the following pages, we respond in detail to all recommendations for improvement suggested by the EEC, and we provide all the necessary information for explaining the actions taken to ensure that the program under re-accreditation is of high quality.

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

The EEC has raised the following issues in relation to the program's design and development. The EUC's corresponding response can be found below numbered according to the number of each point/issue in Findings and/or Areas of Improvement

Comments by the EEC:

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. While teaching staff appeared to be aware of how course learning outcomes were aligned with program learning outcomes, a formal process involving all staff in discussing how their individual course learning outcomes align with the overall program outcomes would be useful to ensure coherence across the program.
2. The categorical nature of many learning outcomes should be reconsidered and reframed within the inclusive theory informing course design and delivery.
3. A stronger focus on how Universal Design for Learning could be employed to inform all aspects of course design, delivery and assessment would enhance the focus on inclusion theory and practice.
4. The course coordinator could review the disparity between student workload in completing a Masters' thesis compared to electives and perhaps develop a minor research project as part of the elective in research methodology.
5. The School Practice placement is a significant component of the Masters program and requires an ongoing commitment to ensure that consistency in student engagement and learning outcomes is assured.

EUC Response

We thank the EEC for these important recommendations, which we have taken into account effectively, as indicated below:

1. We are in full agreement with the EEC that courses' learning outcomes should be aligned with the program's learning objectives and evidence should exist on this. A formal process involving all staff in discussing how individual course learning outcomes align with the overall program outcomes is in place, through the Program Evaluation Review (PER) process during which programs are reviewed and revised based on feedback from faculty and other teaching staff, students and alumni, Advisory Board and external experts panel. Documents and information in relation to PER can be found in the 200.1 application form submitted for the re-accreditation of this program. Examples of this exercise are attached in Appendix I of this response. The Appendix presents the tables that result for the discussion among the teaching staff on the way the program courses are aligned to the program objectives and learning outcomes. In addition, in the design of the study guides submitted with the evaluation

application, it is noted that each week/theme includes individual learning objectives, which correspond to each course's/module's learning objectives as outline in the courses' syllabi. The coordinator of each course in collaboration with the coordinator of the Program makes further effort to inform accordingly and support instructors in following and maintaining this alignment during the design and delivery of their courses. To this end, coordinating meetings are held, and this will be further enhanced, between the program coordinator, the course coordinators and the course instructors twice a semester to allude to a more formal structure of regular meetings beyond the PER process.

2. The program coordinator and teaching team acknowledges the EEC's concerns on the categorical approach of some of the courses included in the program. To address this concern, we have further enhanced the following existing practices and apply new ones as well:
 - All compulsory courses of the program hold an inclusive education perspective as they focus on issues that are not specific to categories or particular groups of learners with disabilities, but rather provide the theoretical background and principles of inclusive education and inclusive pedagogy, with some background to the history of the policy and practice of special education, mainly through a sociological perspective and the philosophical foundations of disability studies. As described in each course syllabus, the aim of the compulsory courses are to provide all students in the program knowledge and understanding of:
 - the theoretical framework through the field of social and cultural foundations of education through an interdisciplinary examination and critique (course EDU610 Sociocultural Issues in Education)
 - the issues around disability and the factors that contribute to conceptualizations of disability, which are created by society and transferred to the educational system (course IED600 Disability in Society and in School)
 - differentiation as a basic requirement for Inclusive Education, at the level of designing and developing learning material and methodologies, for all learners (course IED610 Differentiation in Inclusive education)
 - the policy, legislative and institutional frameworks of Special and Inclusive Education in various countries, and how these are related to pedagogical, aspects (course IED 620 Special and Inclusive Education: Policy and Practice)
 - the core ideas and constructive elements of teaching through theories of learning and models of teaching (course IED685 Teaching Methodology in a School for All)

Students firstly are introduced to the disability politics and the aspects of equity, social justice, ableism and disablism, disabled people's emancipation and educational policies, through the content of the core courses: IED600 Disability in Society and in School & IED 620 Special and Inclusive Education: Policy and Practice. Theoretical approaches and evidence based critical analysis form the fields of Disability Studies and Critical Disability Studies inform the content of these two courses. In addition, part of the content of the courses IED 620 Special and Inclusive Education: Policy and Practice and IED610 Differentiation in Inclusive education includes aspects of a categorical approach to disability, in order to ensure that graduates have the opportunity to at least once in the duration of the program acquire some information

and knowledge on the various characteristics that students with disabilities and special educational needs may have. This is considered particularly useful for students that may not choose any relevant elective or choose a Master thesis, for the completion of their studies. The main objective is for all students in the program to have the opportunity to gain some understanding of learners' individual needs in order to be in a position to design and develop differentiated and universally designed learning processes that on one hand would respond to individual needs and on the other hand are applied in the mainstream inclusive classroom setting. Students are equipped with relevant knowledge and skills to use graduated approaches and evidence-based strategies and assessment procedures to meet students' needs in effective and non-discriminatory ways. For instance, they are given the opportunity to get acquainted with the ways in which 'response to intervention-RTI' and 'functional behavioural analysis' approaches can be incorporated in school-wide and personalized supports and intervention strategies, in order to address learning difficulties and challenging behaviors in systemic, proactive and empirically validated ways. Moving beyond remedial and assimilationist forms of providing SEN support, students are expected to provide quality first teaching through differentiated instruction, and to identify and address the root causes of learning and/ or socio-emotional difficulties. Knowledge of disability-related characteristics and comorbid conditions can be instrumental in informing students' pedagogical decision-making in inclusive classrooms, while developing their reflective thinking and praxis to problematize and challenge discriminatory and deficit-oriented perspectives on SEND.

- Courses specific to certain disability categories are restricted to three (3) (out of the six (6)) Elective Courses for those students who are interested to focus on particular groups of learners, and those students who need to record such modules in their course of study in order to comply with particular employability criteria (e.g. to work as special educators in specific educational systems).
- The design and development team of the program, in collaboration with the Student Advising Centre, will continue their efforts to maintain a balance between the categorical approach in elective courses by ensuring that course scheduling equally provides the option for the other three (3) Electives Courses (i.e. Intercultural Education, Technology and Disability, Contemporary Issues in Inclusive education), which hold a broader inclusive education and design for all approach. It is also noted that students are able to select only one elective during their studies, unless they do not follow the MA Thesis path, where they need to select one more elective course.
- Following the EEC's suggestion, the program's objectives and learning outcomes have been now revised and reframed in a less categorical nature and towards a more inclusive theory, in order to reflect the rationale explained in the previous paragraphs and integrate the recommendations of the EEC. The revised learning objectives and outcomes of the program draw attention to diversity, and equitable and inclusive learning for all children. The learning outcomes that were based on the categorical nature were reframed within the context of the politics of disability and the principles of inclusive pedagogies, universal design for learning and differentiating instruction, so students are equipped to identify factors of exclusion and apply inclusive teaching strategies for children with different types of disability and/or children who constitute

minority/ies in a school setting. Please see Appendix II for all revised learning outcomes and objectives. It is also noted that the revised learning outcomes and objectives have also been aligned to the new curriculum and program courses, as per our response in Section 1 above (Appendix I: Program Content and Objectives Alignment).

3. We share the concerns of the EEC that a program on inclusive education should also implement inclusive education practices in its own design and delivery. The implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles is one of the main concerns of the program design and development team. The faculty of the Department of Education Sciences is highly involved in the university Faculty Development Programs. One of the areas covered during the faculty development activities is inclusive education, differentiation and UDL in higher education. An example of the material presented in these faculty development seminars can be found in Appendix III. The main aim is to respond to the UDL principles through the design and delivery of the e-learning courses as shown in the table below:

| | Activities and course design | Means, technology and tools |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Provide options for Engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of the course in weeks/themes/units with indicative timeframe for study • Facilitation of self-paced learning/study • Regular contact with instructor in a variety of ways • Assignments and learning activities linked to personal experiences, background, professional status etc (e.g. variations of practical experience, assignments linked to own experiences and work environment) • Compulsory and optional activities • Opportunity to choose some graded activities over others. • Options for individual and group activities and assignments • Options for authentic work (e.g. conducting of small research projects in activities, assignments) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMS with accessibility features • Study guides available in various forms (word document, pdf) as well as content structured on platform follows the study guides • LMS build-in communication tools (e.g. discussion forums, chat options and messaging) • Options for communication off platform (e.g. blogs, personal IM, social network closed groups, video channels) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | <p>that avoid reproduction of literature but entail practical/implementation sections)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety in assessment methods (e.g. projects, portfolios, quizzes, open-ended questions, public dialogue discussions, discussion forum) | |
| Provide options for Representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative options of introduction of new knowledge and content (e.g. readings, teleconferencing, slide notes, pre-recorded videos, links to external content) • Both English and Greek literature • Uses of Glossary (in some courses that terminology is especially important) • Use of synchronous and asynchronous content connection activities (e.g. wikis, presentations, mind-mapping) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos (accessible where possible) • Text on platform (online documents) • Visuals (e.g. diagrams, images, mind-maps) • Hyper-titles where possible • Recorded teleconferencing meetings available to all |
| Provide options for Action and Expression | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronous and Asynchronous options for interaction (student-student, student-instructor, student-content, student-platform) though various channels • Variety in assessment methods (e.g. projects, portfolios, quizzes, open-ended questions, public dialogue discussions, discussion forum) • Variety of types of questions in final exams (though by regulation all need to be written exams) • Creative assignments (e.g. presentations, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive videos • Interactive (user-controlled) content (e.g. though authoring tools such as H5P) • Alternative accepted modes of communication (e.g. email, IM, discussion forum, chat, social media closed groups) • Alternative accepted modes of class participation (e.g. written, auditory, video presentations) • Access to Assistive Technology and reasonable adaptations through the Committee |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | repositories of resources, peer review activities) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments broken in consecutive sections/parts during the semester (one building on the other) | for the Support of Students with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs |
|--|---|--|

Nevertheless, acknowledging the EEC’s concerns and suggestions for further employing UDL in all aspects of course design, delivery and assessment in order to enhance the focus on inclusion theory and practice, and the fact that not all instructors are well aware of the UDL framework, further actions are planned. For example, the program coordinator and teaching team have included an exercise/template in order to facilitate the preparation of instructors in designing and delivering their courses’ content and material in alignment with UDL. An example of this exercise can be found in Appendix IV.

4. The program coordinator and the program team acknowledge the EEC’s concern about the disparity between student workload in completing a Masters’ thesis compared to electives. As indicated in the program’s curriculum (see Appendix II) the options for substituting a Master thesis compulsorily includes one research elective, which focuses on more advanced methods of qualitative or quantitative research than the compulsory course of Educational Research Methods. In addition to this, the course coordinators of each research course will continue to collaborate closely with the course instructors for the design and development of the courses’ content and requirements, in order to ensure balance in workload and effectiveness in relation to students’ research skills development. The course coordinators will enhance their efforts towards this aim by also providing instructors with some examples of how research courses’ assignments, can include opportunities for students to engage in small-scale research projects. See Appendix V for an assignment example which includes:
 - Development of methodological design for the conduct of a small-scale research project
 - Design and development of all pertinent data collection tools, information sheet templates and informed consent form templates
 - Research conduct: Data collection and analysis
 - Presentation and discussion of findings in the form of a research paper.

5. The School Practice placement is indeed considered a significant component of the Master’s program and the program’s team agrees with the EEC that it requires an ongoing commitment to ensure that consistency in student engagement and learning outcomes is assured. To this end, the following actions have taken place:
 - Revisions of the School Practice Guide in order to include options for students from various backgrounds to get engaged in practical experience activities corresponding to the learning outcomes of the School Practice course. Revised School Practice Guide was submitted in the final version of the 200.1 Evaluation Application. In addition, the School Practice Guide is reviewed and revised on a regular basis, in order to capture current changes in educational policy and the conditions in the settings students’ practice may take place. Following the EEC suggestions for reflecting on students’ engagement and consistence with the learning objectives of School Practice, the relevant Guide has been reviewed and revised during June 2021 (see Appendix VI, recently revised School Practice Guide)

- Memoranda of Understanding and collaboration have been established with universities in Greece (where the majority of the e-learning students is based) who update the coordination and monitoring of the students' school Practice, in close collaboration with the Program Coordinator and other members of the Department faculty. To ensure consistency and effectiveness in relation to learning outcomes a well-structured protocol for the implementation of the School Practice across countries and placements is developed in collaboration with partners, the program coordinator and the School Practice coordinators and mentors. The protocol can be found in Appendix VI, under a recently revised School Practice Guide. The Guide was revised with the collaboration and contribution of scientific collaborators in Greece (where we currently have students pursuing School Practice). The same procedures will be followed for any other MoU and collaboration that may be established for the implementation of the School Practice.

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

The EEC has raised the following issues in relation student-centered learning, teaching and student assessment for the program. The EUC's corresponding response can be found below numbered according to the number of each point/issue in Areas of Improvement.

Comments by the EEC:

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. A stronger alignment between the program's objectives/intended learning outcomes and the courses provided is an opportunity to be considered. This is about the balance between elective and compulsory courses, especially addressing the research-oriented objectives, the practical training and the onset of the program in English. There is scope for more clarity to make the alignment scalable and to have a tighter organization to safeguard the objectives and intended learning outcomes.
2. Although the overall assessment per regular course is a university regulated policy, the 50% for the final examination and the 50% for assignments and the on-going evaluation might not do justice to the diversity of students enrolled in this program, e.g. students who are more eager to write in a self-paced way instead of clear-cut exams under time constraints. This program on inclusion might advocate a more flexible and tailored approach to honour students' strengths even better.
3. The program might like to consider the use of moderation in the assessment of assignments. This could be considered to be a quality assurance matter.

EUC Response

We thank the EEC for these important recommendations, which we have taken into account effectively, as indicated below:

1. For the alignment of the program's objectives/intended learning outcomes and the courses we provided an exercise that is performed by the program design and development team during the PER process (see EUC response in Section 1: Study program and study program's design and development above). In addition, please find attached examples of this exercise presented in a table (please see Appendix I), in which all program courses are aligned to the program objectives and learning outcomes.
2. As correctly noted by the EEC, the overall assessment per regular course is a university and nationally regulated policy, which according to the national regulations should include a **written exam under invigilation, in designated examination centers (see CY.Q.A.A. announcement here: <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/el/nea-ekdiloseis/anakoineseis-el/166-2018-07-13-exetaseis-ex-apostaseos-programmatapspoudon>)** as follows:
 1. *All courses of an e-learning program should have a final exam.*
 2. *Exams are conducted in physical presence of students in certified/designated examination centers, which do not necessarily need to be in located in Cyprus.*

3. *The examination centers should be located in central geographical locations that can be easily accessed by students living in different places.*
4. *The maximum number of students in each exam group should be 60 (sixty) given that the room capacity allows the following setting: examinee – empty seat – examinee.*
5. *Invigilators during the exam should be fulltime faculty members or scientific collaborators of the Institution offering the program, provided one invigilator per 30 (thirty) students in each group.*
6. *The course instructor should not invigilate any group with less than 30 (thirty) students.*
7. *Students total grade is a cumulation of the final exam grade and the grade obtained from the rest of the course activities.*

In light of the national regulations, the suggestion of the EEC for the provision of alternatives to the written examination is not possible to be implemented – at least not currently. Nevertheless, we strongly acknowledge the importance of providing multiple ways for engagement and alternative opportunities for students' assessment. Hence, given the restrictions, the following strategies are already in place, and will be further enhanced, in order to better respond to the diversity of students enrolled in the program and advocate a more flexible and tailored approach to honour students' strengths:

- The program coordinator in collaboration with the courses' coordinators support course instructors to include a variety of assignment formats/types and activities as part of the total students' assessment, by providing creative, alternative and interactive examples such as: individual and/or group assignments in the form of small projects, reflective activities (e.g. journals and blogs), portfolios, presentations that may be delivered in diverse ways (e.g. live audio and/or video, pre-recorded, in presentation software/applications, in collaborative online tools, etc.). In addition, where possible instructors are encouraged to provide options to students and not strictly define the means/type of assignment delivery/presentation. An example of this kind of assignments is provided in Appendix VII, with includes guidelines and evaluation rubric of a group presentation assignment required from students, which also provides various options for the final outcome (i.e. options for the format, mode, type and delivery of the presentation).
- The grading allocated to assignments and on-going assessment of the students is divided up in a number of different group and individual activities of various formats, in order to provide more opportunities to students to accumulate more points/grades towards the successful completion of their courses, in order to avoid the risk of failure in case they do not perform well in a single course requirement. See table below for a suggested breakdown:

| DESCRIPTION | PERCENTAGE | DUE DATE |
|---|------------|---|
| GRADED ASSIGNMENTS: | | |
| 1. Discussion forum (individual): special and inclusive education legislation critical analysis | 5% | 1 st – 5 th week |
| 2. Group written report assignment: written report on special and inclusive education legislation critical analysis | 10% | End of 5 th week |
| 3. Blog: Individual Post and comment on at least a peer's post | 5% | 2 nd – 12 th week |

| | | |
|---|-------------|----------------------------|
| 4. Group presentation: Presentation and analysis of a group of learners with disabilities and/or special educational needs (including responses in the corresponding discussion forum) <i>See separate guidelines on options for the mode of presentation</i> | 10% | see timeline of weeks 6-11 |
| 5. Written assignment: Reflection and analysis of pedagogical practices for the group of learners presented in group presentation | 20% | 12 th week |
| 6. Final exam (closed or open books) | 50% | TBA |
| Total | 100% | |

- Provide alternative ways for preparation for the final exams, while at the same time compliance with the national regulations is maintained. To this end, the program coordinator in collaboration with the course coordinators and the Professional Development Committee have included faculty training and education opportunities on the variety of final exams assessment methods, given the restrictions. These involve the following strategies:
 - Invigilated written **open-books** examinations, for which students are previously supported to organize their notes, highlight important points, conduct activities during the semester that will help them navigate the course material
 - **Take home preparation for the exams** in the form of project/portfolio/creative activity, which students can prepare, while their written invigilated final exam will take the form of a report and/or a reflection on the work performed in a previously self-paced way.
 - Final examination papers **with different sections each including a variation in the type of questions**, with equal weight in grading, in order to respond to as many different types of learners as possible. E.g. a final exam paper including Section A: Multiple Choice Questions, Section B: Short Answer Questions. Section C: Open Ended Questions. An example of such an examination paper is included in Appendix VIII (in Greek, with translated headlines). The European University Cyprus is promoting this approach by internal policy, which also involves a moderation mechanism for the preparation of the final exams papers. Relevant university internal guidelines and examination framework is included in Appendix IX.
 - The final exam paper is reviewed by a designated Department Committee to ensure the balancing in the different types of questions.
 - Students are given the opportunity to take a mock exam beforehand to familiarize themselves with the format and invigilated nature of the exam.
- Finally, final examination format may vary for students identified as students with disabilities and/or special educational needs, who are supported by the corresponding committee of the European University Cyprus. The Committee of Students with Special Educational Needs (Ε.Φ.Ε.Ε.Α.) (details have been provided in the application form 200.1 of this re-accreditation process), provides academic accommodations/support to all referred/registered students, the identification of whom takes place after their official registration to the University. The Committee informs all

instructors for the presence of students with disabilities and/or special educational needs in their courses and provides information and guidelines about the reasonable adaptations each student is entitled, during the course as well as for the final exams. In summary, reasonable adaptations in relation to the final exams may include: (a) allowance of additional time for examinations (normally 20% of the examination time); (b) simplification of the wording of the exam paper (the module's terminology or definitions which the student has been taught and is assessed on are excluded); (c) explanation of unknown words during the examination (the module's terminology or definitions which the student has been taught and is assessed on are excluded); (d) frequent rest breaks are suggested during the examination; (e) accessibility of the exam paper (basic guidelines provided); (f) oral examination. Relevant guidelines available to instructors are included in Appendix X.

3. The process of monitoring and moderation of students' assessment procedures and methods in is one of the main concerns of the university's internal evaluation mechanisms. We would like to inform the EEC that the Department of Education Sciences follows relevant practices based on the instructions of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CY.Q.A.A.). For instance, the Department uses external examiners in assessing students' Master and Doctoral Thesis. In addition, based on the guidelines of CY.Q.A.A., we maintain final exams for a period of three years and also do a random sampling of all courses' assignments (Good-Average-Poor) and keep them for two years (see CY.Q.A.A. instruction: <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/el/nea-ekdiloseis/anakoinoseis-el/126-apofaseis-21-synodos>). Courses' assignments and final exams are presented to external evaluation committees during quality assurance procedures conducted by the CY.Q.A.A.

Additionally, acknowledging the EEC's further suggestions and in order to safeguard the quality assurance of students' assignments assessment grading, the Department of Education Sciences, after a Department Council Meeting (02.06.2021) decided to introduce the process of internal review of 10% randomly selected assignments. An internal review committee (each time including faculty members other than the instructor) for the program will now review the selection of assignments in order to verify that the rubrics and the assessment criteria available to students are followed and are aligned to the program's aims and objectives.

It is noteworthy to clarify that within the framework of the University's 35-hour Professional Development Program for all faculty members and scientific collaborators which focuses on various aspects on teaching and learning, topics such as grading procedures and differentiation of grades, are offered every academic year.

In addition, to further support the assignments assessment moderation process the Program team will enhance existing practices of the Department, which include:

- Pedagogical meetings between all involved faculty, as well as regular meetings between Coordinator of the Program, the course coordinators and the teaching staff
- Collaboration among instructors of the same course, in order to discuss and check the assignments provided by each of them for the same course, the consistency in evaluation rubric as well as the consistency in the evaluation comments and marking based on rubrics.



- Use of LMS (Blackboard Learn) tools for evaluating assignments. Tools include marking rubrics for each assignment, and a tool for aligning goals and standards of assignments with courses learning outcomes.

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

The EEC did not raise any issues in relation to the Program's Teaching Staff.

Comments by the EEC:

Areas of improvement and recommendations

This section called for no recommendations for improvement.

EUC Response

We thank the EEC for their very positive comments on the Teaching Staff of the Program. The Faculty will continue to work hard and stay committed to maintaining and further developing learning and teaching approaches with experience and knowledge from current and future research, as well as through our own professional and academic development.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

The EEC did not raise any issues in relation to the Program's Teaching Staff.

Comments by the EEC:

Areas of improvement and recommendations

This section called for no recommendations for improvement.

EUC Response

We thank the EEC for their positive comments on the student admission, progression, recognition and certification processes of the Program. The Department of Education Sciences and the Program Coordinator will continue to work hard and stay committed to maintaining and further developing the procedures and the implementation of regulations for student enrolment and progression in the program. In addition, collaborations for the Department and the University with competent bodies and other institutions will continue to be reinforced in order to ensure well established systems of student recognition and certification of their qualifications.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

The EEC has raised the following issue in relation learning resources and student support in the program. The EUC's corresponding response can be found below numbered according to the number of each point/issue in Areas of Improvement.

Comments by the EEC:

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. ... the current approach is well aligned in terms of balancing capacity and available services. The program is also planning an offer in English and the committee has discussed the challenges of scaling the current approach up to a parallel offer in a different language. The committee recommends to analyze the impact on the current capacity not only of the teaching staff but also secondary resources and services. Synergies between both tracks should be identified and used to connect learners from both tracks as much as possible.

EUC Response

1. We share the concerns of the EEC on the capacity and available services for offering the program in both English and Greek. To address this concern the Department and the program Coordinator are facilitating, and will continue to do so, the work of faculty and services in the following ways:
 - a. *Hiring of new full-time member of Faculty:* A new academic post has already been announced for the position of a Lecturer or Assistant Professor in Research Methods in Education, with a strong pedagogical background. The new position is anticipated to respond to the needs of this program in both English and Greek, which share Educational Research modules. At the same time, as described in the position qualifications, the new member of academic staff is expected to be able to support the programmes with respect to modules on innovative pedagogical approaches (see Appendix XI: full-time faculty job position announcement). Required qualifications for new positions, inter alia, include the competence to teach courses in English. In addition, it is highlighted that during the preparation for the re-accreditation process, the Department had advertised, and in the meantime has hired a new member of Faculty in the position of Lecturer in Disability Studies and Inclusive Education, Dr Maria Tsakiri, who is now the new MA Education Sciences: Special and Inclusive Education Coordinator. Further, a five-year (2021 – 2024) planning has recently been conducted by the Department for the fulfilment of four additional full-time faculty positions (see Appendix XIII)
 - b. *Hiring of scientific collaborators:* New hiring positions for the appointment of scientific collaborators are announced at the end of each academic year based on the teaching needs of all programmes for the upcoming academic year and given the Teaching Hours Reduction (THR) obtained for the full-time Faculty for the next academic year/semester. As the THR is announced on a semester basis, additional hirings may take place at the end of each semester–beginning of the following (see Appendix XII): scientific collaborators job position announcement for Fall 2021). Required

- qualifications for these new positions, among others, include the competence to teach courses in English.
- c. *Existing experience:* The MA Programme was initially accredited in both Greek and English and was now submitted for re-accreditation in both its Greek and English versions. The Department is ready to support both versions of the programme, with the English programme being open to both international students, as well as Greek and Cypriot students who wish to study in English and fulfil the English language proficiency entry requirement. It is also noted that another postgraduate program at the university (MA Education Sciences: Early Childhood Education) already successfully runs in English Language with a number of international students. Hence, resources and services are already in place within the Department and the University for the support of English Language programs. Nevertheless, the Department will continue to support these efforts by combining opportunities across English Language Programs (e.g. options for cross program elective courses), as well as between the Greek and English versions of the program (e.g. some students of the Greek program already conduct their Master Thesis in English in order to increase their international outlook).
 - d. *Shared events and activities:* The faculty will sustain and increase efforts for the organisation of events in the framework of internationally funded research projects or other available resources, which will be used as opportunities for assignments, Master Thesis, and other course related activities for students of both Greek and English versions of the program. Collaboration and interaction of students across the two versions of the program will also be promoted through this kind of activities and events.
 - e. *Resources and Literature:* In addition, it is particularly highlighted that the teaching staff supporting the MA Programme will strengthen their effort to expose students of the Greek Language program to academic literature in English, and hence resources and literature available will be mostly common between the two language versions of the Program. This is already a general practice, as a great part of the scientific literature available and used at a postgraduate level is in English language (see syllabi in Course Descriptions, Annex 2 of the 200.1 MA Programme re-accreditation application document). With the recent introduction of the Library Resource Building tool in the Learning Management Systems used at the University, exposure to international literature is further facilitated and easy to link to specific course content and assignments.



6. Additional for doctoral programs
(ALL ESG)

N/A



7. Eligibility (Joint program) (ALL ESG)

N/A

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC has overall found the MA program compliant with the standards and recommended accreditation. The EEC has not identified any additional overall areas of improvement, other than the ones addressed in the previous sections of this report.

EUC Response

Overall, the Department of Education Sciences of the European University Cyprus and the Coordinator of the Program MA Education Sciences: Special and Inclusive Education, would like to thank the EEC for the constructive feedback on the Program, and would also like to reassure the Committee that the faculty will continue to work hard and stay committed to maintaining and further expanding the high quality and international perspective of this academic program, and research activities. We found the EEC's candid discussions, a constructive learning process. The review was a positive experience which has provided us with important input on how to move effectively forward. In addition, we have thoroughly reviewed the findings, strengths and areas of improvement clearly indicated by the EEC following its review and attempted to respond to each item specifically and succinctly, indicating our actions. By embracing the EEC's comments and suggestions, we are convinced that the Program MA Education Sciences: Special and Inclusive Education will be further enhanced in order to more effectively ensure the learning outcomes of its students. In this regard, we are grateful to the EEC for their candid discussions regarding our program, and the insightful comments and suggestions throughout their report.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Position</i> | <i>Signature</i> |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Dr. Maria Tsakiri | Program Coordinator | |
| Dr. Katerina Mavrou | Chairperson, Department of Education Sciences | |
| Prof. Marios Vryonides | Dean, School of Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences | |

Date: 2/7/2021

