Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 09 February 2023

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:** University of Nicosia

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

  In Greek:

  Εγκληματολογία (1.5 Έτος, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ, Εξ Άποστάσεως)

  In English:

  Criminology (1.5 Years, 90 ECTS, MSc, E-Learning

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

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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 300.1.1/1 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 programme of study in each assessment area. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*

- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 2nd column of each table, the HEI must respond on the following:*

    - *the areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
    - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*

- *The institution should respond to the EEC comments, in the designated area next each comment. The comments of the EEC should be copied from the EEC report **without any interference** in the content.*

- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on separate document(s). Each document should be in *.pdf format and named as annex1, annex2, etc.*

Introduction

We refer to the report of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the evaluation – accreditation of the programme of study MSc in Criminology (1.5 Years, 90 ECTS, Master of Science, E – Learning) which was prepared following the onsite visit at the University of Nicosia by the members of the EEC on 07 November 2022, from 09:30 to 18:30 Cyprus time.

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and thorough work during the onsite evaluation of the MSc in Criminology programme. We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation.

We have considered their report thoroughly and the following is our response to all points raised by the EEC. Under each assessment area, please see our brief comments to the findings and strengths outlined in the EEC report. In response to the areas of improvement and recommendations made by the EEC, please find our response and actions taken in column 2 of the table in each section.

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

The EEC found the MSc in Criminology E-Learning programme to be designed with program objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and to have explicit intended learning outcomes – evidenced within the teaching materials for each module. They noted that the program offers a variety of modules that contribute to its overall objectives, and it also fits well with the internationalization strategy of the University. It was stressed that these are in line with modules that are taught on similar masters programmes internationally. In addition, they found staff to be well-connected to key forensic academics in other countries and encouraged them to continue these associations at conferences, joint research, and knowledge exchange visits.

The EEC also highlighted several strengths of the programme: The staff are hardworking and committed to their students; this was evident particularly by the student feedback which the panel gained at the meeting with students and graduates who were very complimentary about their tutors on this course. This is a unique masters program in Criminology within Cyprus. The whole team appears committed to providing the best learning experience for the students. Pastoral and welfare assistance is in place. Resources are good and tutors and administrative staff are helpful. Finally, the committee was pleased to see that support mechanisms for students and teachers are established, and that the organization is providing support for special needs of students.

The EEC made two main recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding responses and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
The panel spent some time considering the philosophy of this program and elements of this will be returned to later in this document. The panel felt that the University may wish to think more about what its overarching philosophical aims are and what the implications of this might be. In particular, two issues are of note. First the policy within this masters program that the thesis elective is not compulsory. Having discussed this in detail the panel feel that at masters level, some independent learning is essential and that on most masters programs this is	The recommendation of the EEC is noted, and we fully appreciate the academic value of an obligatory thesis element. This has been an issue of internal discussion also in the past. The current University policy across Cyprus (set by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance in Higher Education) is that the thesis is not mandatory in Master-level programmes and the MSc in Criminology has abided by this policy in order to offer flexibility that responds to the needs of the local market and to our students' pedagogical needs for a broader professional development. We note that an important number of our students are mature and experienced practitioners, who choose to enroll in our programme in order to get a broader scope of knowledge through a number of different areas in the field of criminology offered within our electives, rather than through the implementation of research on one topic of specialisation. Nonetheless, recognising the value of the thesis element and the significant immediate and long-term benefits associated	Choose an item.

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evidenced by way of the thesis. Whilst we acknowledge that – as with many masters degrees – there are students who are continuing to work throughout the time of their study, we do not feel that this should negate the necessity to undertake some independent learning, since this is really what distinguishes postgraduate work from study at the undergraduate level. Additionally we are of the opinion that students who are still working can often undertake thesis projects that are of a real benefit to their professional lives (for example police officers).	with completing a Master's-level dissertation, the programme committee has committed itself to more strongly encouraging students to opt for the thesis option. We also aim to encourage them to opt for the thesis option through student mentoring and advising. Relevant ideas will be further explored.	
Second, we feel that in keeping with an overall aim to deliver the best quality criminology masters program, that the University may wish to consider increasing its staff expertise in mainstream criminology. Current staff are very well qualified and we acknowledge both this and their levels of hard work and commitment. However, the faculty of social sciences does appear to be somewhat psychology heavy and we feel that the faculty may wish to consider increasing staff expertise in relation to mainstream criminology. We feel this would have great benefits for the appeal of the course.	We appreciate the EEC members' recommendation in further enhancing the programme's staff expertise with mainstream criminology. We are taking into consideration their suggestion which will be fully examined under the 2023-2024 Department and University budget.	Choose an item.
Click or tap here to enter text.	We would like to refer to the EEC's choice as *'partially compliant'* for sub-area 1.2 (*Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review*). The specific subarea was found to be '*fully compliant'* at the f2f (conventional) mode of the program which is identical to the DL one. Based also on the EEC's comments to all sub-areas of Section 1: 'Study program and study program's design and development' we feel that the *'partially compliant'* assessment is not justified.	Choose an item.
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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment
(ESG 1.3)

The EEC positively noted that "discussion with students indicated satisfaction with their experience while studying the programme. Students were also satisfied with the support they received from their tutors and support staff". The EEC further noted that "the general programme documentation and the student guides demonstrate constructive alignment, explicitly linking the teaching and assessment approaches with the overall programme objectives and learning outcomes. The sample exam papers provided some examples of these links".

The EEC also highlighted several strengths of the programme: "A suitable e-learning platform and methodology are in place; Committed teaching staff who are respected by their students; Quality of the course guides – appropriate level of detail in the study guides clearly benefits students; Support infrastructure for students with special needs, with emphasis on success in a DL environment; A week-by-week structure of the curriculum is planned and is made visible in the VLE; The availability of synchronous and asynchronous activities enhances student engagement with the program; It is a strength of the program that is has been successful in attracting a large number of experienced professionals in fields relevant to the multidisciplinary area of criminology who bring extensive practical experience to the program".

The EEC made several recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding responses and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
Greater clarity on how research is linked to teaching, particularly with regards to how students benefit directly and indirectly from staff involvement in research activities and the research culture of the university. In the EEC's discussion with staff, members of the program team offered examples where the synergy between research and teaching work in practice in their sessions.	We appreciate the committee's suggestion, which was discussed in detail during their visit. As the EEC notes: "*the faculty offered examples where the synergy between research and teaching work in practice in their sessions*".	Choose an item.
The study program still has a great potential to exploit the gains from combining theoretical and practical studies. For academic education at Master's level, the involvement	We agree with the committee's recommendation in bringing together theory and practice. The students are involved in such projects during the "Research Methods in Criminology" course in which they are asked to design, develop, and write their own research project. Please, also refer to our previous comments about the Thesis.	Choose an item.

of graduate students in their own research projects is the preferred avenue of achieving this goal. In doing so, we see room for improvement in directing a larger percentage of students, if not all of them, towards writing a Master's thesis.		
In lieu of thesis work, other forms of capstone projects that bring theoretical instruction to fruition in a practical way and manner may be applicable (such as multidisciplinary projects or engagement in service learning projects, which involve students in solving hands-on problems for partner organizations).	We thank the EEC for pointing out alternate ways for students to combine theoretical knowledge and practice. We fully agree with this, and it will be implemented where possible, either via multidisciplinary course assessments or via engagement in service-learning programs.	Choose an item.
Need to provide further opportunities for skills development in professional practice contexts. Placement and internship is an area where such skills can be developed. Or if that is not practical, short professional practical experiences as practical training possibilities need to be adapted to the geographical diversity of a DL program.	We appreciate the EEC members' recommendation regarding skills development in professional practice contexts. Even though the specific master's program is a theoretical one and does not include placement / internship, we are in the process of further exploring opportunities (for our nonprofessional students) regarding short professional visits to relevant bodies. As correctly stated by the EEC this needs to be careful thought of due to the DL nature of the program, and the large geographical diversity of its students, who are coming from various (often remote) areas.	Choose an item.
Click or tap here to enter text.	We would like to refer to the EEC's choice as *'partially compliant'* for sub-area 2.2 (*Practical Training*). As stated above, the specific is a theoretical postgraduate program (not an applied one) and hence does not include the practical training component. Therefore, we feel that the *'partially compliant'* assessment is not justified.	Choose an item.

3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

The EEC found that there are six faculty members supporting the Masters program. All have PhDs (Forensic Psychology, Psychology, Social Psychology, Evolutionary Psychology, Cyber, Law). The program is also supported by two adjunct staff members. Although there are no formal Visiting staff, the program does include guest lectures from esteemed international academics.

The EEC positively noted that teaching staff have strong and sustained research profiles with publications, including peer- reviewed journal articles, book chapters, books and conference proceedings. Staff profiles show active engagement in practice (policing, law, voluntary sector) as well as indicators of esteem, such as invitations to sit on expert groups relevant to their specialist subjects. Staff teaching on this program have active research profiles, including European Commission projects. Links between research and teaching are clear, and staff discussed how they ensure that their own research is integrated into their teaching content. It was further highlighted that the number of staff teaching on this program is adequate and it is clear that staff are competent, engaged and passionate.

In addition, the EEC found that the University has a dedicated Research and Innovation Office to support staff in research grant applications, and it was suggested that central 'top slicing' and research funds is low – providing an increased incentive for staff to apply for research funding. The University has an improved sabbatical policy with staff offered one-year at 100% pay. The application process is transparent and fair. Staff training is formalised and completion of the 12 weekly workshops leads to a certificate of attendance. Moreover, the EEC noted that "students on the program expressed the view that feedback is incorporated into teaching improvements, and that alongside formalised feedback, staff regularly ask for suggestions for improving the program".

The EEC highlighted the following strengths of the programme: Staff have very strong academic profiles with sustained and high-quality publications, research activity and esteem; Staff are engaged with relevant professional organisations and contribute to training, committees, and expert groups; Staff clearly ensure that their research expertise is integrated into their teaching, and students found this interesting and engaging; The staff contributing to this program are established academics; Staff are incentivized to publish in Scopus indexed journals, and to attend relevant conferences; Staff are clearly passionate about the subject and engaged with the academic and practitioner communities; Student feedback is actively encouraged, both formal and informal, and suggestions for improvements appear to be taken on board.

The EEC made the following recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding response and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
Whilst staff have extremely strong academic profiles, there seems to be an over-representation of psychology-based expertise. Whilst there is no suggestion that these staff are not able to teach the criminology focused courses, we suggest that any future recruitment attempts to match expertise with the courses being delivered. We feel the program would be strengthened (in teaching, research and collaboration) with the recruitment of criminologists.	We welcome the Committee's recommendation; as stated above, we are taking into consideration their suggestion which will be fully examined under the 2023-2024 Department and University budget.	Choose an item.
Staff publications are strong, but activity appears have slowed in recent years. This may be a matter of CVs not being up to date, but it does suggest that staff may not be allocated sufficient research time.	We thank the EEC for identifying and pointing out that the "*staff have very strong academic profiles with sustained and high-quality publications, research activity and esteem*". The University, the School and the Department support the development of a research culture, encouraging all faculty members to strengthen their research profile. This is facilitated through various policies, such as the RTR, to be found in the institution's internal regulations (see Appendix). We also agree with the EEC that the research activity of the teaching staff could be enhanced. Even though this is challenging due to the large course and administrative work, there are continuous efforts to establish different research groups and collaborations between the members of the Department and the School. The establishment of such research groups will allow for further collaboration between the faculty in the Department as well as interdepartmental and inter-institutional research activities.	Choose an item.
Training is provided to all staff, but we suggest that the University considers introducing additional teaching qualifications such as the Higher Education Academy.	We appreciate the EEC members' suggestion, and the University will take this into consideration.	Choose an item.
Staff are allocated protected research time, but this does not appear to be formalised in a workload allocation model. The introduction of such a model would provide transparency to all staff.	We appreciate the EEC members' recommendation, and fully agree with it. We would like to refer to Chapter 6 of the University of Nicosia "Internal Regulations", which covers "Faculty Matters and Policies" (6.5) including detailed information and policies governing Research Time Release (please see Appendix A).	Choose an item.

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

The EEC positively noted that there is a systematic and comprehensive set of regulations in place regarding the admission, recognition, progression, and certification of students. The regulations are pre-defined, published, and transparent. The pre-defined processes of student admission are administered consistently. There are well established processes and tools in place to monitor the progress of students during their course of study. They also noted that the set of regulations governing the admission of students is appropriate for the study program.

The EEC highlighted the following strengths of the programme: The University uses a transparent admission system, which is consistently administered; Admission is based on several steps and requirements, personal statements, references and interviews; The University has a good support system for students in place, allowing the University to collect data on students' progress, monitor their progression and act upon it if necessary; In particular, the assignment of student advisors and the established system of student tutoring and mentoring can be considered as strengths of the program; The University also responds well to students with special needs.

The EEC made the following recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding response and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
Given the relatively large number of practitioners and experienced professionals in the student population of the study program, the University may want to consider if and how prior work experience should play a role in the admission process.	We thank the EEC for identifying and pointing out the need to consider prior work experience and / or expert knowledge during the admission process. Indeed, relevant work experience is taken into account when evaluating and short-listing applicants. However, as we need to follow the national rules governing admission to postgraduate programs (as stated by the Ministry of Education in Cyprus) work experience cannot be considered in lieu of an undergraduate degree (which is the basis for admission to a Master's program).	Choose an item.
The multidisciplinary nature of the program and the diversity of educational and professional backgrounds of prospective students also raise questions about the adequate entry levels of study skills and prior academic knowledge, particular for candidates who may have	We appreciate the comments made by the EEC members. Indeed, prior higher education qualifications including those acquired at institutions of higher learning outside of Cyprus are fully recognized given that they are included in the list of recognized institutions / programmes listed in the "The Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications" (KY.S.A.T.S.): https://www.kysats.ac.cy/index.php/el/	Choose an item.

been out of academia for a longer period of time or who may have trained and educated in areas outside of criminology. It follows from this recommendation that it is particularly important to have regulations and procedures in place that fairly recognize any prior higher education qualifications and achievements of prospective students (including those acquired at institutions of higher learning outside of Cyprus.	As stated above, achievements and /or relevant work experience of prospective students are taken into consideration during the short-listing process of admission. The admissions criteria can be found at the programme's link: https://www.unic.ac.cy/criminology-msc-3-semesters-distance-learning-in-greek/	
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5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

The EEC positively noted that "the program offers satisfactory resources to support distance students (e.g., access to VLE materials, and the IT infrastructure is comprehensive), the library offers a wide range of resources to support student learning (access to databases and repositories of relevance to the discipline), and electronic materials are easily accessible by distance learners". Finally, "human support resources are adequate, both on the academic and the administrative side. Student support seems to be adequate and is organised by the distance learning unit".

In addition to the above, the EEC noted that "technologies that support the delivery of course content and interaction between students and staff have been employed, mainly the virtual learning environment (VLE) and auxiliary technologies to enhance communication synchronous (a chat function) and asynchronous (discussion fora). The VLE is the central focus of online pedagogy and it is complemented by the use of synchronous Webex sessions. The EEC had the opportunity to review the VLE materials for the Criminal Psychology course which consisted of narrated PPTs, links to references and an impressive number of online resources, plus activities and exercises. Assessment approaches in the distance learning mode employ a model where end of term exams are the key assessment event in the student journey, in addition to other summative activities and formative tasks such as self-evaluation activities. The EEC reviewed the UNIC-Distance-Learning-Pedagogical-Model, where space has been given in articulating the assessment strategy".

The EEC highlighted the following strengths of the programme: "The personnel (both academics and administrators) are well trained in DL delivery; The use of formative assessment and activities to support self-evaluation and reflection is commendable in the distance learning delivery; The virtual learning environment offers opportunities for interaction; Online exams are the norm in the program which supports the flexibility aspect of the program and is certainly a good practice element in the program design; Staff are keen on diversifying assessment by offering alternative and authentic forms of assessment (in discussion with the EEC, staff discussed their approaches to assessment and feedback in their courses); The use of open book exams for some courses (supported by a Proctorio) is optional but represents good distance learning practice".

The EEC made the following recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding response and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
Further attention should be given to enhancing the interactive elements to provide personalised feedback to student input. This is done up to a point but the program team	We thank the EEC for identifying and pointing out alternate ways for enhancing the interactive elements of the programme. The students receive regular personalized feedback on their weekly activities, assignments, and presentations. In addition, social media (wikis) are included in the courses and are incorporated	Choose an item.

should consider the use of innovative technologies that support immersion and decision making, e.g., adoption of innovative technologies that transfer students to real-life situations, such as computer simulations and serious games. Technologies such as social media (wikis) were discussed by the program team, however the EEC has not seen examples of wiki use in the program.	in the courses' platform. The use of innovative technologies that support immersion and decision making, such as adoption of innovative technologies that transfer students to real-life situations which are suggested by the EEC are explored through the UNic IT unit and utilised in the delivery of our DL programmes and, where appropriate, they are also incorporated to the F2F courses. It must be noted, however, that the program is offered in Greek and there are limitations of such specialized material in the Greek language market.	
We recommend the use of open book exams for all courses of the program as they can provide better authentic assessment opportunities. They can also support academic integrity by combining assessment format redesign and a proctoring system. This is subject of course to professional and regulatory bodies' agreement.	We appreciate the EEC members' recommendation on employing the use of open book exams for all courses of the program, and /or combining assessment format redesign and a proctoring system. As stated above, a few of the courses are using open book exams, but this would be difficult to apply in all courses due to the multidisciplinary nature of the program and the different needs of the various courses.	Choose an item.
There should be further emphasis on choosing the dissertation as an option at the end of the programme rather than the electives. This will be in alignment to the research focus that the institution has.	We appreciate the EEC members' recommendation to put more emphasis on the thesis option. It has been explained during the meeting with the EEC members and stated above that many of our students do currently choose this option, and there is a good balance between those who choose the thesis option and those who opt for the elective courses.	Choose an item.
A student facing assessment and feedback strategy document would enhance clarity and help students to achieve learning outcomes.	We thank the EEC for identifying and pointing out ways for enhancing students' clarity while helping them better achieving learning outcomes. Students are provided with assessment guides which outline the aims of each assessment as well as receiving guidelines on key points to consider by their lecturers.	Choose an item.
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6. Additional for doctoral programmes
   (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
Overall the program is well structured and there are synergies between and among the modules and the overall aims and objectives of the program. The learning outcomes are appropriate.	We would like to thank the Committee once more, both for the positive and fair evaluation, as well as the constructive comments and suggestions and the fruitful discussion that we had with its members during the on-site visit.	Choose an item.
The courses and their compulsory and/or elective character may need to be reviewed. In particular the panel feel that UNIC should consider making the thesis a compulsory element of the master's program.	Thank you for your recommendation. We accept the committee's recommendation to review some of the compulsory / elective courses. Following the EEC's suggestion, the 'elective' courses taken during the second semester of studies, have now become 'compulsory' courses (please see Appendix B).	Choose an item.
Staffing of the masters program appears to be good but the panel noted that although the profiles of existing staff are excellent, there are not many members of staff who could be called 'mainstream criminologists' and a much heavier bent in favour of staff with psychology specialisms. Whilst this is adequate to run the program, the University may want to review its academic staffing provision in order to expand and diversify the program to be more in line with mainstream criminology and to allow for the appropriate supervision of post graduate theses in mainstream criminology topics.	Thank you for your recommendation. As stated earlier in this document, we are taking this into consideration and it will be fully examined under the 2023-2024 Department and University budget.	Choose an item.
We have also made recommendations for improvement in the sections of this report for the consideration of the program team.	We thank the EEC for identifying and pointing out areas of improvement for the programme and for making relevant recommendations to achieve this.	Choose an item.
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C.

D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Dr. STAVROULA SOUKARA	PROGRAM COORDINATOR	
Dr Marios Adonis	Head of Department of Social Sciences	
Prof. Klimis Mastoridis	Dean of School of Humanities and Social Sciences	
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Date: 09 February 2023

Internal