

Date: October 7th 2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

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

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Βιολογία του Ανθρώπου (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Human Biology (BSc, 4 years, 240 ECTS)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English, Greek
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):** N/A

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 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

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 would like to thank the members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and academic approach during the on-site evaluation of the programme and for producing a detailed and professionally written evaluation report. We highly appreciate the EEC's constructive comments and recommendations for further improving our programme. This evaluation indeed adds value to our programme taking into consideration the EEC's members' expertise in the subject and/or related areas.

Below you will find detailed responses to all recommendations.

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Oral assessments should be subject to additional oversight. Recommendation: Ensure that oral examinations are evaluated by two academic staff members, with remote observation as an option if physical presence is not feasible.	- The oral presentation of the final thesis is assessed by two examiners. This will continue to be the case. - Faculty will be advised to record oral presentations if assessment by two examiners is not feasible.	Choose level of compliance:
There is currently no required internship component in the programme. Recommendation: Establish an internship course as part of the curriculum and try to implement it as a mandatory course.	- We agree that this is very important. As of academic year 2026-2027, BIOL-499 will be offered under Section C to strengthen the internship component of the programme. This is reflected in the updated course path (Appendix 1).	Choose level of compliance:
The Bioinformatics course is currently elective. Recommendation: Make the Bioinformatics course a mandatory part of the core curriculum.	- We agree with the suggestion. As such BIOL-412 Modern Genomics and Bioinformatics will become a Required course. This is reflected in the updated course path (Appendix 1).	Choose level of compliance:
The programme currently includes two introductory biology courses. Recommendation: Merge BIOL-110 and BIOL-111 into one comprehensive General Biology course.	BIOL-110 is a foundation course and not part of the curriculum of the Human Biology programme. BIOL-110 has some overlap with BIOL-101 and BIOL-102 to prepare students for the two Biology courses.	Choose level of compliance:
Blended learning approaches are not yet systematically integrated. Recommendation: Implement blended learning strategies across selected courses to enhance learning outcomes and accommodate diverse student needs.	We strongly agree with the Committee. At present this is not feasible due to DIPAE guidelines but we would be happy to implement following appropriate changes.	Choose level of compliance:

<p>Student feedback implementation – reiterated recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation: Reiterate the importance of gathering, analyzing, and acting upon feedback from current and former students.</p>	<p>We agree that student feedback is important. To ensure that students have a voice, the School and Departmental committees have a student representative. In addition, Student Affairs administers an exit questionnaire, and we encourage students to complete it.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Quality assurance is primarily handled internally - reiterated recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation: Increase transparency and incorporate external oversight by appointing formal external examiners for both individual courses and the overall programme.</p>	<p>The program already benefits from external evaluation through the Internal Programme Evaluation Process (IPEP Process - Chapter 3 Internal Regulations) that takes before every re-accreditation cycle. In this process a committee of two senior teaching research faculty from the programme (excluding the co-ordinator), one student from the programme, one faculty member from another University and an external stakeholder.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The current assessment method for the course BIOL-491 (Undergraduate Thesis) lacks an oral component.</p> <p>Recommendation: Introduce an oral examination component for BIOL-491, requiring students to formally present and defend their thesis proposal in front of academic staff.</p>	<p>BIOL-491 Course assessment has been amended to include an oral presentation (Appendix 2).</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Lack of a formal mechanism for addressing student complaints beyond the course instructor level.</p> <p>Recommendation: Develop a formal, transparent procedure for addressing student complaints beyond the instructor's level, including student representatives.</p>	<p>The formal mechanism to address student complaints may be found in Internal Regulations - Academic Policies Chapter 2 (Appendix 3).</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Continuous pedagogical development of teaching staff.</p> <p>Recommendation: Encourage and formalize regular participation of faculty members in pedagogical training and professional development activities.</p>	<p>We agree with the EEC that continuous pedagogical development is important. The following are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Teaching and Assessment Committee at the School level which oversees teaching and assessment and proposes improvements. - Faculty Development Seminar. All Faculty are required to obtain a teaching qualification. - On-going training on AI through the distance learning unit. 	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>High proportion of part-time and adjunct teaching staff.</p> <p>Recommendation: Implement mechanisms to ensure consistent teaching quality and curricular alignment across all instructors.</p>	<p>We appreciate the comment, but at present, the number of full-time faculty members is sufficient to cover the essential teaching and coordination needs of the programme, ensuring stability and continuity. Part-time faculty are engaged strategically to teach highly specialized courses (e.g., Bioinformatics) where their specific expertise enhances the programme's quality and relevance."</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Lack of a clearly defined and published selection policy for oversubscription scenarios.</p> <p>Recommendation: Establish and publish a formal selection policy to be used in cases of oversubscription, outlining specific criteria and procedures.</p>	<p>Student admission is based on transparent and objective criteria, ensuring fairness and equal opportunity. In cases of oversubscription, priority is given to applicants who best meet or exceed the established academic requirements, while also considering diversity and the overall balance of the student cohort.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Inability to evaluate student progression due to lack of accessible data.</p> <p>Recommendation: Systematically collect, analyze, and present student progression data such as year-to-year progression, on-time graduation, and withdrawal rates.</p>	<p>Student progression data is compiled by the Department of Academic Affairs. The data is then distributed to the School Dean, the Department Head and the Programme Coordinator for specific actions.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Regular revision and modernization of course materials. Recommendation: Review and revise syllabi on a regular basis, ensuring that the most recent editions of textbooks and teaching materials are consistently adopted.	Faculty members are advised to review their syllabi, at least annually. This will be reiterated.	Choose level of compliance:
Apparent lack of an ombudsperson mechanism. Recommendation: If not already present, establish an ombudsperson position or office to handle student complaints and mediate conflicts independently and confidentially.	Simple academic matters are addressed directly by the Programme Coordinator, ensuring timely and efficient resolution. More complex issues are referred to the Department of Academic Affairs, which through formal procedures ensures that all student concerns are handled fairly, transparently, and in accordance with University policies.	Choose level of compliance:

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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N/A

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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N/A

B. Conclusions and final remarks

We would like to thank, the EEC for their thorough review and constructive feedback regarding the BSc in Human Biology programme. The University greatly appreciates the Committee's professional evaluation and valuable insights, which confirm the strength of our academic programme.

The Committee's observations highlight several areas of excellence within the programme:

- A robust commitment to internationalization and partnerships, attracting students globally.
- A carefully designed curriculum that effectively combines theoretical knowledge with practical application, addressing not only academic goals but also societal and professional demands.
- A strong emphasis on quality assurance at all levels.
- Modern infrastructure that supports effective learning, including well-designed teaching spaces and extensive e-resources.
- An experienced teaching staff, many of whom are internationally educated and engaged in active research.
- Small class sizes, creating a supportive and interactive learning environment for students.

These positive remarks encourage us to continue advancing the programme to maintain a high standard of education and competitive international standing. Below find our response to the ECC's concluding comments.

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Add an oral component to the undergraduate thesis defense (BIOL-491), and include a second examiner for all oral defenses to ensure transparency.	The oral presentation of the final thesis (BIOL-491) has been amended to include an oral presentation as part of the assessment. Two examiners will now assess oral presentations. Faculty will also record presentations if a second examiner cannot be present (Page 5, Appendix 2).	Choose level of compliance:
Merge the two introductory biology courses (BIOL-110 and BIOL-111) into a single integrated General Biology course.	BIOL-110 is not part of the Human Biology curriculum but functions as a foundation course. BIOL-101 and BIOL-102 already fulfill the introductory biology needs of the programme (Page 3).	Choose level of compliance:
Introduce a structured internship course and consider making it mandatory.	Internship course BIOL-499 will be added to the curriculum under Section C, strengthening internship opportunities within the programme. Planned for implementation in 2026–2027 (Page 3, Appendix 1).	Choose level of compliance:
Make the Bioinformatics course mandatory.	BIOL-412: Modern Genomics and Bioinformatics will become a required course in the curriculum. Reflected in the updated course path (Page 3, Appendix 1).	Choose level of compliance:
Systematically implement blended learning strategies across the curriculum.	Blended learning is strongly supported by the University, but implementation is delayed due to DIPAE guidelines. The institution advocates for adopting blended learning upon regulatory approval (Page 3).	Choose level of compliance:
Actively use student feedback in curriculum development.	Student feedback mechanisms are integrated at the School and	Choose level of compliance:

	Departmental levels through committees that include student representatives. Additionally, exit questionnaires are administered and encouraged for all students (Page 4).	
Enhance quality assurance by appointing external examiners.	The Internal Programme Evaluation Process (IPEP) includes external members, such as a faculty member from another university and an external stakeholder, ensuring robust quality assurance (Pages 4, Chapter 3 of Internal Regulations).	Choose level of compliance:
Create a formal complaints mechanism with student representation.	A formal mechanism for handling student complaints has been established. Details regarding this mechanism are now included in Chapter 2 of the Internal Regulations (Page 5, Appendix 3).	Choose level of compliance:
Establish a publicly available admissions policy for oversubscription scenarios.	Admissions are currently based on transparent academic criteria. In cases of oversubscription, applicants are prioritized based on academic merit and cohort balance (Page 7).	Choose level of compliance:
Regularly update course syllabi with the latest textbook editions.	Faculty members are instructed to annually review and update syllabi to incorporate the latest editions of textbooks and materials. This process will be further emphasized (Page 8).	Choose level of compliance:
Track and analyze key student progression data (e.g., retention and graduation rates).	Data on student progression is systematically compiled by the Department of Academic Affairs and shared with the School Dean, Department Head, and Programme Coordinator for review and action (Page 7).	Choose level of compliance:
Provide structured pedagogical training for faculty.	Measures to promote pedagogical development include mandatory teaching qualifications, training on AI tools, and faculty development seminars overseen by the Teaching and Assessment Committee (Page 6).	Choose level of compliance:
Ensure greater coherence across part-time and adjunct faculty.	Adjunct faculty are selectively hired for their specialized expertise in specific subject areas, ensuring continuity in course delivery and contributing to the programme's quality.	Choose level of compliance:

In conclusion, the University of Nicosia deeply values the thorough evaluation and constructive recommendations provided by the EEC. As demonstrated in the report, following the ECC's guidance, significant actions have been taken to further enhance the quality and competitiveness of the Human Biology programme. These include integrating an oral component for undergraduate thesis assessments, introducing an internship course, mandating Bioinformatics as a core course, strengthening student feedback mechanisms, and improving quality assurance processes with external oversight. Additionally, the programme has addressed concerns regarding admissions transparency, pedagogical development for faculty, and the use of up-to-date learning materials. These improvements, combined with the programme's strong academic foundation, exceptional student support, and alignment with the European

Qualifications Framework (EQF), ensure that the programme continues to produce highly skilled graduates prepared for postgraduate study and employment in a dynamic global environment. The University reaffirms its commitment to excellence and to maintaining the programme as a distinguished offering in Cyprus and beyond.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Kyriacos Felekis	Dean, School of Life and Health Sciences	
Prof. Eleni Andreou	Head, Department of Life Sciences	
Dr Stella Nicolaou	Coordinator, Human Biology	

Date: October 7th 2025