

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 19/4/2023

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme of study**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

In Greek:

Επιστήμη του Αθλητισμού (4 χρόνια, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Sports Science (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor of Science)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek/ English
- **Programme'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 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 sincerely thank each member of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for taking the time to review, evaluate and provide their valuable experience and insights for the BSc program of Sports Science of the University of Nicosia. We feel privileged to have received such positive comments by the EEC and having had constructive discussions with its members.

In summary, the EEC found the programme of Sports Science of the University of Nicosia to have well developed structure with scientifically sound course content, well developed teaching methods with high level laboratory teaching, staff with international research profile, strong student support with clear entry criteria and strategies to support students who have difficulties in meeting formal criteria, as well as high standard of teaching and learning resources, physical resources, human support resources as well as student support, at a higher level than what can be expected from a European standard.

The EEC has also identified certain areas for improvement and we welcome those comments and we aim to implement them as they shall make our program even stronger. Please find below the detailed responses to the EEC's recommendations.

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

Findings by the EEC:

- “The bachelor of sports program is well developed”.

We would like to thank the committee for this comment

Strengths:

- “Well developed course structure and scientifically sound course content”.

Over the years, faculty members worked collectively to develop the courses modules of high quality content. We thank the committee for the positive comment.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
It must be considered if enrollment criteria secures high level students. The committee is concerned that the uptake of all applicants and that the low course failure rates indicate that the scientific demands may be too low	Over the last few years, as the department has grown, it is observed that the quality of the students has increased as well, and students chose to stay in Cyprus and study at the University of Nicosia which offers high quality programs. With regards to admission criteria, these are reviewed annually and compared to student performance. Based on this analysis the criteria might change.	Choose an item.
It may be considered to implement more research based project work.	Yes, we agree with the committee's comment. It has been decided that the program coordinator and the teaching staff of the program will actively encourage students to undertake a research final year project. Specifically, each colleague will present his research area and research interests during his/her lecture time and during orientation sessions for the students. This will lead to an increase in research student projects and the research output of the program.	Choose an item.
It must be ensured that the scientific level is secured by sufficient external evaluation of student exams (for example that 25% of exams are censored by an external expert from another university).	The University assessment system at the University of Nicosia but also in Cyprus in general does not utilize external evaluators.	Choose an item.

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

Findings by the EEC:

- “The style of teaching and the teaching methods are well developed”.

The faculty member had all studied and/or worked abroad, in different countries and universities. The knowledge and experience acquired was brought back to Cyprus, and everyone strived for the benefit of the Sports Science program. Again, we thank the committee for their positive comment.

Strengths:

- “Students praise that their teachers are easily approachable to discuss difficulties and provide straightforward help”.

Faculty members early recognized the need to be close to the students. We are happy to see that the students recognize this and that our effort to create a positive environment for the students has paid out. We are also pleased that the EEC has positively noticed it.

- “Students can gain experience with laboratory-based performance testing while still in the undergraduate program”.

Having a hands-on practical laboratory experience was considered important from the very beginning. We have found it to be an important element of our program and we are pleased that you have identified this as one of our strengths.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
We did not see examples of student assessment and feedback from staff. All students should be invited to provide their reflections on each course that they have studied. Staff should present the students with examples of how they have listened to the students feedback and acted to remedy any problems. Something like a “You Said - We Did” report.	Student Evaluations of the modules are taking place at the end of every semester and are managed through the UNIC Portal. The evaluations are activated once 75% of the semester is completed and deactivated one day before the beginning of the examination period. The results are released 21 days after the end of the examination period. The faculty are requested to make relevant announcements during their classes and encourage the students to complete the Student Evaluation through the Student Portal of the University. The results of the Student Evaluations will be discussed in the Department’s Council (based on Senate decisions, April 2023), where the student representative will be informed on any necessary actions to address the student comments and evaluations.	Choose an item.
We would like the University management team to reflect upon the view that some courses	Academic freedom is strongly encouraged at the University of Nicosia, but there is also a University policy regarding course assessment as described below:	Choose an item.

<p>may be over-assessed. If the learning outcomes for a module can be assessed by one form of assessment then why not do this? This would free up academic time to focus on other academic areas including research.</p>	<p>Tests, mid-term exams and other assessments should be scheduled in the course outline. Occasionally, examinations may be given at other times in order to allow more time for student preparation or to have several sections tested together.</p> <p>The University has also got a recommended grading policy: Final Examination 30-50% Tests 15-30% Term Paper or Projects 15-30% Mid-Term 30-40% Homework 0-20% Quizzes 0-10% Field Trips 0-10% Class Attendance & Participation 0-10%</p> <p>The University guidelines also include the following notes: (a) The final examination may or may not be comprehensive. If it is not, its weight should correspond to the material covered. (b) In special cases, the final examination could be in the form of a portfolio/thesis/major project work/continuous course assessment. This however needs the approval of the Department Council. A list of such courses should be compiled by the Head of Department and be kept by the School Dean and the University Registrar. (c) All sections of the course should be coordinated by a course leader who ensures consistency of grading policy. (d) Homework, field trips, and class participation together should not exceed 20%.</p> <p>Overall, most teaching faculty have one mid-term exam, one assignment and a final exam in their modules, so in general there is a uniform assessment in the Sports Science program.</p>	
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3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

Findings by the EEC:

- Teaching staff recruitment and development
“Recruitment and development appeared well functioning for permanent staff. Part time staff seemed well qualified but development possibilities appeared limited”.

We agree with the committee’s comment on part-time staff, and discussions on this matter have been taken to the School level, in order to prepare suggestions to the University.

- Teaching staff number and status
“The education is very much based on part-time employees which is a risk for continuity, development and research based teaching”.

We appreciate the committee’s comment and concern. Indeed, this is a very reasonable thinking, but we must also note that the vast majority of the part-time staff have been teaching here for a decade, and we do not anticipate any change in staff in the near future.

- Synergies of teaching and research
B.Sc. students are given the opportunity to see and be introduced to the professor’s lab-work for research. We consider this to be good practice.

We would like to thank the committee for the positive comment. Being a relatively small program, compared to the programs of other major universities abroad, gives us the time, space and availability to work closely even with BSc students.

Strengths:

- All permanent staff had international research profiles.
- Some part time staff had international research profiles whereas others were more national oriented.

It has to be noted that many of our part-time staff are PhD holders with teaching and research experience both in Cyprus and abroad. These lecturers can work independently and offer high quality teaching and research. Contrary to other universities abroad, our part-time staff has knowledge and experience equivalent to the full-time staff.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
The number of permanent staff compared to part-	At the moment there are 8 full-time staff of the University of Nicosia who teach modules in the Sports Science program, and 11 part-time staff. Seven of the	Choose an item.

<p>time staff appeared as a point of concern, as we fear that the good commitment of part-time employees could disappear at some point because they have to focus on other activities to secure their financial existence.</p>	<p>part-time staff are PhD holders. The part-timers are specialists in particular areas, and they teach modules in their area of specialization. The part-time staff already have got other jobs outside the university, but they choose to teach in the Sports Science program, in order to be involved in academia and for professional development. The majority of the part-time staff have been teaching in the Sports Science program for almost a decade.</p>																																					
<p>It would be helpful to provide data on student entry and progression level for BSc students. How many students applied? What percentage were accepted? What percentage progressed from year to year? Provide these data for the past few years to compare.</p>	<p>Here are the data as provided by the relevant university offices of the university:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">How many students applied?</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Fall 19</th> <th>Fall 20</th> <th>Fall 21</th> <th>Fall 22</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>62 students</td> <td>50 students</td> <td>57 students</td> <td>67 students</td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="4">What percentage were accepted?</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Fall 19</th> <th>Fall 20</th> <th>Fall 21</th> <th>Fall 22</th> </tr> <tr> <td>59 students</td> <td>50 students</td> <td>55 students</td> <td>63 students</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>95,16%</td> <td>100%</td> <td>96,49%</td> <td>94,02%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Dropout Average*:</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Completion rate *:</td> <td>86%</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>Note: Students are allowed to study on a full time and part time basis thus to calculate the avg graduation/dropout rate, data from cohorts in 2013 and onwards were used as to provide for the extended period of part time study.</i></p> <p>The grades distribution for the last few years has been as follows: (“I” stands for Incomplete, where students were missing an element that had to be submitted within a month, i.e. late submission of an assignment, and “W” stands for Withdraw, as students withdrew from a certain module_</p>	How many students applied?				Fall 19	Fall 20	Fall 21	Fall 22	62 students	50 students	57 students	67 students	What percentage were accepted?				Fall 19	Fall 20	Fall 21	Fall 22	59 students	50 students	55 students	63 students					95,16%	100%	96,49%	94,02%	Dropout Average*:	14%	Completion rate *:	86%	<p>Choose an item.</p>
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Academic Year: 2021 - 2022									
Program: SPRSG Επιστήμη του Αθλητισμού (Πτυχίο)									
A	B	C	D	F	I	W	Total	Average	
471	582	492	377	131	39	38	2130	2.39	
22.11%	27.32%	23.10%	17.70%	6.15%	1.83%	1.78%			
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Academic Year: 2022 - 2023									
Program: SPRSG Επιστήμη του Αθλητισμού (Πτυχίο)									
A	B	C	D	F	I	W	Total	Average	
200	232	187	144	85	53	24	925	2.33	
21.62%	25.08%	20.22%	15.57%	9.19%	5.73%	2.59%			

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

Findings by the EEC:

- Student admission, processes and criteria
Criteria for admission was presented together with strategies for development of students who did not meet the criteria initially.
- Student progression
Student progression initiatives were presented.
- Student recognition
Examples of student scholarships and recognition of especially sport performance skills were presented.
- Student certification
Certification practices are in place.

The University of Nicosia takes great pride in having high-standard procedures in place with regards to student admission, progression and certification. Various categories of scholarships are available for well-performing students, for student-athletes and other criteria exist for students who can be in need of financial aid in order to acquire a university degree. We would like to thank the committee for noting these positive points.

Strengths:

- Student admission, processes and criteria
“It is a strength that clear strategies to support students who have difficulties in meeting formal criteria are defined”.
- Student progression
“It is a strength that clear strategies to support students who have difficulties in meeting formal criteria are defined”.

As above, we would like to thank the committee for acknowledging and noting the strong procedures in place on student support and welfare.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
A way should be found to allow teachers to fail very underperforming students in the program without having to spend a great many hours on individual support before.	Teachers have been failing underperforming students. Passing mark is 60% at the University of Nicosia and students must have a 2.0/4.0 CPA in order to graduate. Those who do not manage to get a passing mark of 60% can sit a second exam in September in order to pass the course. If they still fail, the students have to re-take the entire module. The university also has specific cut-off lines and students who do not meet that standard are placed on probation. With regards to individual support the university's students' office can provide free tutorials for those students. The instructor can advise the students but the professor is not obliged to spend hours on end for each failing student. We do acknowledge that some teachers	Choose an item.



	<p>might choose to spend hours on their own accord, not on the basis of any university regulation. The program coordinator will make every effort to make the teacher acknowledge and recognize their right and obligation to fail underperforming students in order to maintain a high level of graduates. Individual support should be given to those that need it, but without exaggerations in the amount of time spent supporting each student.</p>	
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5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Findings by the EEC:

A higher level than what can be expected from a European standard was apparent

Strengths:

- “Teaching and learning resources, physical resources, human support resources as well as student support is of very high standard”.

We would like to thank the committee for their positive comments. The University of Nicosia always strives to offer the students high level learning resources and support, as can be expected by an international university of high standard. The investment in this field has been great over the years and it is continuing to expand.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
We consider the extant learning resources and the student support (for learning) one of the particular strengths of this program	We would like to thank the committee for their positive remarks.	Choose an item.



6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

NA

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)

NA

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
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Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Choose an item.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
<p>The panel has been convinced that the evaluated programmes offered by the University of Nicosia were of the highest standards in Cyprus based on the feedback from professors, management, students and external stakeholders to the University. The educational programmes evaluated were of a standard commensurate with other European programmes that the panel is familiar with. However, we strongly encourage that the University invests in research support services. What is clear from the evolution of the most successful universities worldwide is that researcher independence and excellence in research provides the basis for excellence in teaching and education. Whilst investment is required this will have a positive impact on other University KPIs. Investment in research not only increases the quality of the University. Investments can also be expected to provide economic return in the form of more and larger grants with overhead as well as increased international recognition followed by elevated student application rates (and further success in international University rankings not the least). It should be noted by the University of Nicosia that the EU funds for research in 2023-2024 is 13.5 billion EUR. Several of the EU research topics are relevant for researchers in the evaluated programs. The panel notes that permanent staff at the evaluated</p>	<p>We would like to thank the committee for their time and effort in reviewing and evaluating the BSc Sports Science program. We do agree with the committee’s comment and suggestion on investments in research, as this will strengthen the Sports Science program and this will have a beneficial impact on the University over time. It has to be acknowledged that the University has taken some important steps towards the right direction in aiding researchers, yet the committee’s advice and suggestion on further investment in research will be seriously considered. More research output will increase the international profile of the faculty and the university alike.</p>	<p>Choose an item.</p>



<p>department are relevant and competitive in this regard. Finally, we would like to thank everyone involved in the evaluation process - the panel received fantastic support from Emily at the Agency through to all the staff and students at the University of Nicosia. Thank you all. We hope you find our recommendations and suggestions helpful and we are convinced that they will help the sport science programmes at the University of Nicosia continue on an upward trajectory over the next 5 years.</p>		
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Dr. George Aphantis	Associate Professor/Program Coordinator	
Dr Eleni Andreou	Associate Professor, Head of Life Sciences	
Prof. Kyriacos Felekkis	Professor, Dean of School of Life and Health Sciences	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: 19/4/2023

