

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 της Άσκησης και της Φυσικής Αγωγής (1,5 έτη, 90 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό)

In English:

Exercise Science and Physical Education (1.5 years, 90 ECTS, MSc)

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

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

- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: 1. Άσκηση, Φυσική Κατάσταση & Υγεία, 2. Φυσική Αγωγή και αθλητική παιδαγωγική

In English: 1. Exercise, Fitness & Health, 2. PE and Sport Pedagogy



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.*

Evaluation committee's overall comments

The evaluation committee was introduced to the bachelor of science program, master's programme and PhD by the programme coordinators. The committee was pleased with the presentations and generally impressed by the program and effort put into them by the staff. Our overriding impression was a very positive one for all three programmes and this was reflected and confirmed by the students we spoke to at all three levels of study. There are of course some areas for development which we have highlighted below.

The faculty and all those involved in the program want to take this opportunity to thank the External Evaluation Committee for their objective, rigorous, and critical evaluation of the University of Nicosia's "MSc in Exercise Science and Physical Education" program. We are appreciative of the committee's positive feedback and validation of the program's merits, which are outlined beneath:

- **Well developed course structure and scientifically sound course content.**
- **Students praise that their teachers are easily approachable to discuss difficulties and provide straightforward help. Students can deepen their experience with laboratory-based performance testing in the master's program.**
- **All permanent staff had international research profiles. Some part time staff had international research profiles whereas others were more national oriented.**
- **Student admission, processes and criteria. It is a strength that the MSc program has capacity to take up all interested students.**
- **Teaching and learning resources, physical resources, human support resources as well as student support is of very high standard.**
- **Student progression**
- **It is a strength that MSc students follow a well structured program and that defined actions are in place to support students who have difficulties.**



This report is a reply to the committee's Areas of improvement and recommendations document. It offers a comprehensive overview of the steps the University of Nicosia plans on taking to enhance the program in line with the suggestions of the external evaluation committee. The report is structured so that the committee's statements appear first in the order in which they occur in their document. Following each bullet point, the answer or action is highlighted in bold.

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

Findings and Strengths for M.Sc. Exercise Science and Physical Education

The master of science program is well developed. Well developed course structure and scientifically sound course content.

We appreciate your findings as well as your comments on the structure and course content of our program. It is our goal to continue to develop our courses and content to provide the best possible learning experience to our students

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
It is recommended that most students should complete an experimental research assignment.	We appreciate the committee's recommendation. As already described above for the BSC program, all faculty involved in the MSc program actively encourage students to undertake research projects. During the orientations session at the beginning of the academic year and during lecture time, faculty present previous research work of graduate students, and describe how these students were able to complete their work and present it at international conferences and/or how the research work got published in peer reviewed journals. Students are also encouraged to attend conferences at the national level, where graduate students have the opportunity to present their own research work, in order to further encourage new students to follow the research thesis option of the graduate 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).	Based on University of Nicosia Internal regulations we do not utilize second marking assessment and the University does not employ external evaluators for student exams.	Choose an item.

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

Findings and Strengths for M.Sc. Exercise Science and Physical Education

Students praise that their teachers are easily approachable to discuss difficulties and provide straightforward help. Students can deepen experience with laboratory-based performance testing in the master's program. The style of teaching and the teaching methods are well developed.

We are very pleased that our students shared such positive beliefs regarding our faculty. During our program meetings, we make sure to discuss and share our individual teaching styles and methods to each other so we can feed off each other's strengths and use alternative methods of teaching. We strive to provide learning opportunities and teaching moments to our students in various ways to enhance their knowledge and understanding of our field. We encourage our students to challenge us with scientific questions regarding the learning objectives or to feel comfortable in discussing issues and concerns regarding the class content or the program

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.	<p>Module student evaluations are conducted at the end of each semester and are managed through the UNIC Portal. The evaluations are activated when 75% of the semester is completed and disabled one day before the examination period begins. The results are made public 21 days after the examination period ends. The faculty is asked to make appropriate announcements throughout their classes and to urge students to complete the Student Evaluation through the University's Student Portal.</p> <p>The Student Evaluations results will be reviewed and considered at the Department's Council (based on Senate decisions, April 2023), and the student representative will be advised of any necessary actions to address the student comments and evaluations.</p>	Choose an item.
We would like the University management team to reflect upon the view that some courses 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>Academic freedom is strongly promoted at the University of Nicosia, however there is also a University policy on course evaluation, which is stated below:</p> <p>The course outline should include dates for tests, midterm exams, and other assessments. Exams may be administered at alternative times to provide for extra time for student preparation or to test multiple sections concurrently.</p> <p>The University has a recommended grading policy:</p> <p>Final Examination 30-50%</p> <p>Tests 15-30%</p> <p>Term Paper or Projects 15-30%</p> <p>Mid-Term 30-40%</p> <p>Homework 0-20%</p> <p>Quizzes 0-10%</p> <p>Field Trips 0-10%</p> <p>Class Attendance & Participation 0-10%</p>	Choose an item.

	<p>The University guidelines also include the following notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(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>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 and Strengths for M.Sc. Exercise Science and Physical Education

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

Your comment is greatly appreciated. Indeed, we are very proud of our teaching staff and their overall teaching and research profiles. A big majority of our staff have taught, presented, and/or collaborated in Universities and/or projects worldwide. In terms of research and participating in project, many of our staff take part and collaborate with various organizations and colleagues around the world. This is something we will continue to do for the exposure of our program as well as for professional growth.

In terms of teaching staff recruitment and development, the majority of our staff are full-time (7). We do have three part-time staff assisting us with teaching and we continuously explore various venues and opportunities to increase their potential for development and involvement (e.g., teaching, research, projects, research or teaching full-time position).

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
<p>The number of permanent staff compared to part-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>The MSc program currently has 7 full-time academics and 4 part-time lecturers. All of the part-time employees have a PhD. Part-time employees are subject matter experts who teach modules in their areas of expertise. The part-time faculty members already hold employment outside of the institution, but they choose to teach in the Sports Science department in order to remain involved in the academia and to advance their careers. The majority of the part-time faculty have been with the Sports Science program for about a decade.</p>	<p>Choose an item.</p>

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

Findings and Strengths for M.Sc.

It is a strength that the MSc program has capacity to take up all interested students. It is a strength that MSc students follow a well structured program and that defined actions are in place to support students who have difficulties. Criteria for admission was presented together with strategies for development of students who did not meet the criteria initially. Student progression initiatives were presented. Examples of student scholarships and recognition of especially sport performance skills were presented. Certification practices are in place.

Thank you for your observation. Criteria for admission are clearly outlined in our program. Student progression initiatives are also in place and each of our staff along with the program coordinator are always assisting and informing each student on how they progress in their degree. In addition, we make sure to praise our students' efforts and achievements through student scholarships and recognition of sport performances. Our certification practices are in place. Considering that the students meet the entry criteria, for now we do have the capacity to take in most our student applicants. As for our students' progression, we find it critical to provide all students a clear path and course of action for them to know what to expect and what it is expected from them in order to complete successfully their degree requirements. We also try to assist students with special needs or difficulties, that said without comprising the learning objectives because we do understand that some of our students have full-time jobs, families, and other obligations.

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It should be considered to strengthen the emphasis on a practical research project as a part of the M.Sc. progression.	All teaching faculty and the coordinator take steps to encourage student practical research participation. Many students choose coursework over a thesis for their professional development and knowledge enhancement. Nevertheless, we emphasize research and participation in research initiatives throughout the students' master's level coursework. In an effort to emphasize the significance of conducting research in their courses, our faculty explain various research methods and statistical analyses, use article analysis or mini-literature reviews, and critique articles to increase students' awareness of the significance of research.	Choose an item.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Findings and Strengths for M.Sc.

A higher level than what can be expected from a European standard was apparent. Teaching and learning resources, physical resources, human support resources as well as student support is of very high standard.

It is an honour to receive such a high praise from you on this topic. We are delighted for your observations regarding teaching and learning resources, physical resources, and human support resources. A satisfied student equals to a successful program structure entailing high standards in teaching, learning, and support. Our staff as well as the administration put the extra effort to make sure that we provide all necessary resources and support to our students in order for them to have a smooth and fruitful learning experience throughout their degree. We do understand that our students sacrifice a lot (time and money) in their lives to invest on their future. Choosing us as their path for academic and professional development/growth is something we take seriously and try to maintain great quality and service to them

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 are grateful for your comment. We have every intention to continue to operate in this way	Choose an item.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
 (ALL ESG)

NA

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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)

(ALL ESG)

NA

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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 appreciate the committee's efforts in examining our programs. We concur that the University should engage more in research and recognize that steps have been undertaken in this direction in recent years. Sports Science ranks among the most research-intensive programs at the school. The committee's comments and recommendations will be carefully reviewed in an effort to enhance the quality of our research efforts and raise the faculty's and university's international prominence.</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. Constantinos Tsouloupas	Assistant 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: 19/04/2023

