

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 19.7.2023

Higher Education Institution's Response

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

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Δημόσια Διοίκηση (3 Έτη, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)

In English:

Public Administration (3 Years, 180 ECTS, PhD)

- **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.*

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

The PhD was considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the PhD programme is consistent with the mission and vision of the School and University, especially in relation to the ambitions about developing a local significance promoting applied research related to public governance and law, that the information and requirements for new PhD students are clearly communicated and available by online resources, and that there is a selective approach for assessing the applications from candidates.

It was furthermore confirmed in the EEC's report that the University and the School of Law have excellent experience of external accreditation processes, that the administrative staff are very engaged with academic staff and with students, and that there seems to be a strong collegial ethos. There was a good quality working relationships within the Department, alumni satisfaction, and a very strong awareness of the strategic environment of the programme, informed by a rigorous PEST and SWOT analysis at School level.

The EEC has further made suggestions for improvement. We address each one herein.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
We see some scope for the improvement of students' ability to communicate and share experiences across their projects and departmental affiliation.	We welcome the recommendation of the EEC. The School of Law holds an annual PhD Colloquium for this very purpose. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs, it holds research seminars which give PhD students the opportunity to present part of their work. We fully appreciate that there is always room for further improvement, and the Department of Politics and Governance will discuss more ways of improving the students' ability to communicate and share experiences across their projects and departmental affiliation.	Choose level of compliance:
We would encourage the comprehensive use of student feedback in considering improvements in the programme design and content for the future.	The recommendation of the EEC is very well received. We note that the departmental quality assurance committee includes a student representative. In the next internal process for the evaluation of the program (IPEP) we will focus on making the	Choose level of compliance:



	students' representative directly engaged in the process. We will further seek the views of students and graduates on the design and content of the programme and their own suggestions.	
For the future the departments could consider if they wanted to have a certain focus or concentration of topics and/or have visiting professors to help develop new areas. It could also be considered, if there are special application areas that are of special interest.	We welcome this suggestion. This comment applies for future reference. We already use visiting professors, but we will consider this option further. We will carefully examine this possibility internally in the Department and consider making specific proposals to this direction.	Choose level of compliance:

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

The PhD has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC was impressed by the focus on not only assisting new applicants into the programme in a flexible manner, but especially the staff engagement with the process of producing a solid foundation for the PhD by having a very flexible attitude towards the timing of the viva. The EEC further noted that developmental support is provided through research methods training for PhD students, and that there is an interesting spread of PhD topics underway, or completed, in the Programme. The PhD research projects have an orientation towards practical and professional relevance.

The EEC has made suggestions for improving the LLM Programme. We address each one in the following table.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The PhD cohort is currently relatively small, though we acknowledge that the Department is also small in numbers.</p>	<p>We note carefully the comment. This is related with the Department’s effort to recruit only the best available PhD students, based on the quality of their background and their PhD proposals. Furthermore, as the EEC notes, the small size of the Department excludes some proposals that we receive due to lack of specialized staff on the proposed topic. We will seek to further grow the PhD cohort as the Department respectively grows.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>The small size of the program may perhaps limit the capacity to hold special courses or lectures to support students.</p>	<p>The comment is well-taken. Some courses or seminars that our PhD students can take (i.e. those of the E-Pedagogical Support Unit) are applicable to PhD students across the University. In the same vein, Research Methodology courses are available for PhD students in both Departments of the School of Law. We acknowledge that if the Department was a larger one there would be more opportunities, but synergies with the School of Law also help significantly in this regard.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



<p>The focus on the specifics of the region (especially legal frameworks) may circumscribe the international reach of the PhD programme.</p>	<p>We are cautious of this observation. We note that following this accreditation, we will offer the Master's Program in Public Administration in English for the first time. We expect that this will enhance the international reach of the PhD programme as well. We are definitely mindful of the need for an international reach of the Programme.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

The PhD was considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC acknowledged that the dedicated academic staff seems to be very responsive to PhD students individual needs and requirements, and are able to accommodate to the need of individual students and their research project. The academic staff that servers as PhD supervisors expands their personal knowledge and skills through engaging in PhD research projects.

The EEC has further pointed out areas of improvement and made certain suggestions. We address each one herein.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Ph.D. students reflected on their status as not being located at the university and expressed a desire for two things: First, having the opportunity to work in a research environment for some time when relevant. Second, to have the opportunity to meet fellow Ph.D. students in various social and academic contexts: e.g. at workshops and at local and international conferences.</p>	<p>The recommendation is most welcome. Indeed, the preceeding COVID-19 pandemic period curtailed face-to-face contact, as well as the availability of common spaces in the University premises. The same stands for PhD colloquia and other events of this kind, which had gone online due to COVID-19 restrictive measures. This is eventually changing over the last few months after having returned to full on-campus activity. The School of Law, the Department of Politics and Governance and their affiliated institutions are engaged in many such events every year and our students do have the opportunity to follow them. However, we do not have available spaces especially for PhD students due to a general shortage in the University premises. The comment is very well-received and we will do our best to further improve in this area.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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

The PhD has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that there is a structured process with checks and balances. The programme has a clear sense of its target market and a mission of addressing a societal need in the region.

The EEC has also made a certain suggestion for improving the LLM Programme, which we address in the following table:

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Protocols for data ownership, and author order in published work, should be clarified and codified in line with international best practice.	We note the comment with interest. The University has an Intellectual Property policy in place in accordance with international standards. The recommendation will be transferred to the Office of the Vice Rector for Faculty and Research, for further action, where appropriate.	Choose level of compliance:

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

The PhD has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the Institution has access to online material in the University's library, as well as extended access to libraries of additional academic institutions, support of students' access to at least one academic conference per year. It has further confirmed that the use of Moodle online learning platform supports individualized interaction between faculty members and doctoral students, catered to each student's needs and research agenda.

The EEC has further made suggestions for improvement of the Programme. We address each one herein.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Facilitating the learning and growth of Ph.D. students should be considered to include the option of attending relevant Ph.D. workshops which are today often associated and co-located with conferences. This could also expose students to comments from other leading researchers and introduce them to alternative theoretical perspectives.	The recommendation is well received. Participation of PhD students in international conferences and workshops is a priority area. We have already included it in our internal practices and the supervisors and supervisory committees are strongly recommended to work to this direction. The University is also discussing ways to facilitate students' participation to such conferences and workshops. The Senate has recently formulated a plan to sponsor PhD student participation in conferences so there might be implementation soon.	Choose level of compliance:

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

The PhD has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section. No deficiencies in the quality indicators have been identified.

The EEC has confirmed that the Programme competes with high-level candidates who, through a particularly difficult process, are accepted to obtain a PhD. Supervisors are expected to have prior experience of completing a PhD. and if not, they are expected to attend the training for PhD supervisors. One member of the Supervisory Committee could also be a faculty member from another School or University (external supervisor), an important element for the rational and objective assessment of the PhD thesis. Students are supported to attend an international academic conference during their studies.

The EEC has further made suggestions for improvement of the Programme. We address each one herein.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Greater interaction between candidates to exchange views and support each other on the Ph.D. journey.	The recommendation is well-received. The School of Law holds an annual Ph.D. Colloquium for this very purpose. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs, it holds research seminars which give Ph.D. students the opportunity to present part of their work. The Department of Politics and Governance will discuss more ways of further improving the students' ability to communicate and share experiences across their projects and departmental affiliation.	Choose level of compliance:
Classically, doing a Ph.D. can be an isolating experience. We note the attempts to build a Ph.D. community and encourage these efforts. It would be good practice to have a dedicated Ph.D. space or shared office to encourage on-campus interactions.	We agree with the comment. Indeed, there is a lot of room for improvement to this direction due to space shortage in our premises. The comment will be communicated and discussed with the University's management, to include it in their future plans for premises' expansion. We note that there are already plans for having a dedicated PhD shared office so hopefully these will be implemented soon.	Choose level of compliance:
If students were enabled to spend more time in the School, the possibility of being more	This is a valid observation. We will continue organizing events suitable for our PhD students to	Choose level of compliance:



integrated into the academic community would be enhanced.	present their work and discuss ways to increase interaction between them and the academic staff of the University.	
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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

We wish to thank the EEC for the professionalism they showed during the execution of their duties. The detailed discussion of all issues pertinent to the degree under evaluation, led to a fruitful discussion between the members of the EEC and the official representatives of the University and faculty members of the programme. The discussion proved to be extremely helpful due to the expertise of the members of the EEC and their willingness to share their suggestions and recommendations for further improving the programme. The demanding set of questions allowed us to elaborate on specialized aspects and deep foundations of the Programme and expand upon the content of the application form.

We have assessed and reviewed carefully the EEC report. We are pleased to note that the report is extremely positive, and we thank the EEC for their remarks and conclusions that are very supportive of the Programme. We note that in their concluding remarks, the EEC has noted that there is much to appreciate about this PhD. programme. It has already developed a good number of successful PhD. theses. It meets a regional demand for high-level research knowledge relevant to the public sector, and to the developmental and career needs, especially of public sector professionals. There is great enthusiasm amongst faculty for the importance of the programme, and for the job of supervision. There is also excellent specialist knowledge of the regional picture.

We fully acknowledge that all programmes are always amenable to further improvement, and indeed we have been constantly working towards further improving our Programme since it was initially accredited. Accordingly, the suggestions for further improvement offered by the EEC are taken very seriously into account. We consider the suggestions of the EEC as very helpful and we will try to incorporate them to the widest extent possible. We thank once more the Committee for all the suggestions/recommendations, and address each concluding remark herein.

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>There is scope to better connect with global scholarly conversations about public administration theory and practice. The specialized regional focus - whilst a strength in many respects - may inhibit the potential for the programme to become more international in its recruitment and impacts. For example, there is scope to use theories and frameworks to generate research knowledge about contexts beyond the region. A further international orientation could also facilitate a broader future recruitment base for the departments.</p>	<p>We are cautious of this observation. We note that following this accreditation, we will offer the Master's Program in Public Administration in English for the first time. We expect that this will enhance the international reach of the PhD programme as well. We are definitely mindful of the need for an international reach of the Programme.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Protocols for data ownership, and author order in published work, should be clarified and</p>	<p>We note the comment with interest. The University has an Intellectual Property policy in</p>	

<p>codified in line with international best practice.</p>	<p>place in accordance with international standards. The recommendation will be transferred to the Office of the Vice Rector for Faculty and Research, for further action, where appropriate.</p>	
<p>Academic staff appreciated the importance of building a PhD community. One limit on this may be the lack of a dedicated on-site space for PhD students. This may disincentivize students spending time on campus (beyond seminars or supervision meetings) and thus limit the scope for community-building. As the PhD community grows, it is important the institution adequately resources academics in the context of workload pressures.</p>	<p>We agree with the comment. Indeed, there is a lot of room for improvement to this direction due to space shortage in our premises. The comment will be communicated and discussed with the University's management, to include it in their future plans for premises' expansion. We note that there are already plans for having a dedicated PhD shared office so hopefully these will be implemented soon. We further note that the School of Law holds an annual Ph.D. Colloquium for this very purpose. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs, it holds research seminars which give Ph.D. students the opportunity to present part of their work. The Department of Politics and Governance will discuss more ways of further improving the students' ability to communicate and share experiences across their projects and departmental affiliation.</p>	

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 visit. We also thank the committee for the time and thoroughness it dedicated to the evaluation of the PhD and for helping us improve the Programme through the suggestions made. All recommendations of the committee refer to further improvement, and some need discussion and potential decision at Senate level as they are not applicable only to this specific Programme. The recommendations and evaluation of the committee are seriously taken into account for the further improvement of the Programme. We consider this endorsement under the conditions of external peer review as a resounding vote of confidence in the PhD and its potential for academic success.

We finally acknowledge the clear positive evaluation and recommendation for accreditation of the PhD.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Achilles C. Emilianides	Professor, Dean	
Christina Ioannou	Associate Professor, Associate Dean	
Andreas Theophanous	Professor, Head of the Department, PhD Co-Ordinator	

Date: 19/7/2023

