Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 6/5/2022

Higher Education Institution's Response

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

- **Town: Nicosia/Patras**

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

  In Greek:

  Διαπολιτισμική Εκπαίδευση και Διαμεσολάβηση (2 έτη, 120 ECTS, Μάστερ, Εξ Αποστάσεως, Διαπανεπιστημιακό)

  In English:

  Intercultural Education and Mediation (2 years, 120 ECTS, Master, E-Learning, Joint programme)

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

- **Programme's status:** New

- **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 300.1.1/2 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.*

- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*

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

- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*

- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

Introduction

We refer to the evaluation report of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the Master in Intercultural Education and Mediation, a distance learning joint degree of 2 years, 120 ECTS Programme of the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras which was prepared following an online visit by the members of the EEC on April 8th 2022.

We would like to thank the EEC members for their constructive and insightful work during the evaluation of the Programme and the productive discussions during the online evaluation.

The Master in Intercultural Education and Mediation programme has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria.

The EEC has confirmed that:

- *The MEd in Intercultural Education and Mediation is an ambitious and excellent Distance Learning programme between the University of Nicosia in Cyprus and the University of Patras in Greece.*
- *The added value of this MEd programme is that it will produce reflexive practitioners, agents that will bring change in the field. The University of Patras is very experienced in practical training of teachers – hence the lead on the practicum which is a key strength of the programme connecting theory and practice - while the University of Nicosia holds the responsibility for the e-learning platform. Both partners equally input into the teaching. There are strong synergies between the two universities in the areas of identities, mediation, and interculturalism.*

- *Students are very positive about the university, they talked about active interaction with the teachers. Staff are very responsive to student emails and requests and there is a great deal of guidance and support.*

- *(they) were highly satisfied with how the two universities have organized and monitored their educational programmes. Our impression is that both institutions are very well organized and that the staff of both universities are very dedicated and committed to their students. The joint programme corresponds with the EQF and is compliant across all areas of evaluation.*

We are pleased to note that the report is very positive, and we thank the EEC for their positive comments.

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

The Master in Intercultural Education and Mediation programme 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 Master in Intercultural Education and Mediation is well designed and organised in so far as it is well structured, and in accordance with the strategy and purposes of the institutions, the sequence of courses is purposeful and coherent, a collaborative spirit among the various collaborators is transparent, the placement opportunities are meaningful and that the structure of the programme follows the European Credit Transfer System.

The EEC has further confirmed that the quality assurance processes, structures, and regulations are transparent and appropriate.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

   1. *Given that the programme has the ambitious goal to educate teachers and related professionals outside of the formal world of schools, specialized classes could be developed in the future that target more clearly the different professional contexts and audiences.*

   Response/Action
   The proposed sequence of courses aims to provide a general overview of a) intercultural education with emphasis on differentiated and culturally responsive teaching and b) intercultural mediation. A future development of the program could include more elective courses to cover the different fields of intercultural mediation such as school mediation, mediation in social work practice, mediation in healthcare, refugee mediation, etc. This development will be based on student candidates' profiles as the ultimate purpose of this program is to highlight the need of a properly regulated profession in accordance to EOPPEP framework (https://www.eoppep.gr/images/EP/EP_Diapolitismikos_Mesolavitis.pdf). The Program Committee will make these decisions after the 2nd year of operation and based of student evaluation of the courses provided.

   2. *While the diverse placement opportunities are welcomed and the practicum expectations are clearly communicated, as the programme grows, quality assurance processes could be*

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considered in selecting the institutions for field placements and in training the field supervisors.

Response/Action

The diverse filed placement serves the purpose of establishing mediation and differentiated and culturally responsive teaching as a core business for schools and/or other institutions. The selection of organizations will follow a clear framework of contact and collaboration. To this end we are prepared to:

- Draw from a wide range of certified organizations, NGOs, etc. as shown in the Practicum Guide.
- Officially address selected organizations and establish a clear communication channel between the Practicum Coordinator and other parties.
- Establish a framework of collaboration which will be ratified through official MOUs with certified organizations. We have already signed such an MOU with the General Secretariat of Citizenship, Ministry of Interior Affairs.
- Resolve all grievances in association with partner organization through official meetings (between program Committee and Head of organization or other stakeholders) and hold a review meeting at the end of each placement.

3. *Since this is a new programme, further work in integrating the curriculum between the two institutions may be good to ensure smooth transitions and a cohesive framework.*

Response/Action

The coordinating committee of the programme in collaboration with the course leaders of the courses will continuously review the curriculum of the courses in order to ensure that there is a cohesive framework.

The two institutions maintain well-established relations as part of the interuniversity programme in Special Education, but also a strong tradition of collaboration in research, conferences, and teaching. These venues of collaboration provide the endeavour for integrating the curriculum of the new programme, while ensuring smooth transitions and a cohesive framework between the two institutions. Once the programme starts, the coordinating committee of the programme will evaluate its implementation in order to further sustain a cohesive framework.

Building a more cohesive curriculum will be an ongoing exercise for both institutions. We are orientated towards integrating interdisciplinary approaches in our courses and this will be based on shared research prospects, good practices, and materials. Our focus is to highlight the variety of approaches in intercultural education and mediation in both countries

and combine localized knowledge production with international aspects of the respective fields.

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

The Master's in in Intercultural Education and Mediation has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section.

The EEC has confirmed that:
 1.the programme addresses topical issues in real-life situations both in society, like anti-immigrant sentiments, and in the multicultural classroom.
2. students are invited to reflect on how they could act in such situations by role play and by letting them experience these situations in real-life settings, which is made possible because of the collaboration with societal stakeholders.
3. it is also evident from the design and wording of the programme that it rejects a pathologizing approach to children of immigrant origin and their parents, and that it aims to include them and give them a voice by inviting students to share their biographies through practices of story-telling.
4. the programme is not afraid to address contested social issues, like moral conflict about differing ideas about gender equality or homosexuality.

5. there are a myriad of diverse types of activities that are foreseen to be carried out in the online setting, making a a quality online learning environment possible.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. *It is an ambitious programme that aims to address both issues related to multicultural society and teaching in the multicultural classroom. Yet, the latter has its particular pedagogical challenges and requires specific knowledge, skills and tools, i.e. intercultural education. In some parts, the balance tended to be too much towards the general and too little towards the specific educational. Finding the right balance is a point to pay attention to in the further implementation of the programme.*

   Response/Action

   The focus of the programme is to achieve a balance between the theoretical underpinnings of interculturalism and the pedagogical dimensions of intercultural education and mediation by helping students master the knowledge, skills and tools to enhance their teaching in the multicultural classroom. To this end, the programme addresses topics and issues that relate to:
   - successful and innovative pedagogical approaches to address cultural diversity at the school and classroom levels;
   - teaching practices and classroom activities to promote intercultural education;
   - differentiated teaching in culturally-diverse classrooms by examining examples of interventions and activities in the classroom. The students will also have the opportunity to design differentiated lessons, which they will implement during the

practicum, whilst also differentiating the learning environments, and evaluation processes;

- the multimodal design of educational programmes and the practical use of CGScholar, and particularly the use of the Storytelling ant the Empathy Map features. CGScholar is a social knowledge ecosystem for teaching and learning across all subject areas, from grade 4 to university, and work or life-embedded learning. CGScholar a learning platform providing an integrated suite of apps that supports the following pedagogical functions:

  - An inclusive class engagement space for ubiquitous learning;

  - A collaborative, multimodal workspace, driven by a "help economy";

  - A dynamic, just-in-time, AI-driven learning analytics engine;

  - An anywhere/anytime web portfolio;

  - A professional place for interactive course design and delivery.

- the practical implementation of intercultural mediation strategies and techniques in various contexts, but also in schools in cases of school bullying and/or intercultural conflicts.
- the practical dimensions (beyond the theory of multiliteracies and bilingual education) with regards to teaching strategies and classroom activities when teaching vocabulary and grammar in the second language (e.g. Greek as a second language);
- ways to sustain collaboration between teachers, schools, and migrant parents so as to cultivate children's inclusions;
- analysis of case studies and critical incidents so that students may reflect on hands-on experiences from real-life settings
- It is noteworthy, that this is the only Master's programme focusing on Intercultural Education and Mediation in the Greek and Cypriot contexts that offers a practicum. During the practicum, students will have the opportunity to implement theory in practice.

2. *In other respects the quality of the programme ultimately stands or falls with how the plans will be worked out. The success of the narrative approach for instance, to bring in students' life worlds through narratives, is dependent on the teacher's ability to create safe spaces for vulnerable pupils. It is promising, however, that in several places this is recognized by the designers of the programme.*

Response/Action

Narrative approach has been proven a useful mean to address vulnerable students' needs and aspirations (e.g. research and application of public narratives with refugee students, close collaboration with schools, Roma community stakeholders and refugee families and camp officials). Our extended research and teaching exposure to such situations has equipped our (adjunct) faculty with competences to deal with multiple views with respect and reciprocity. Establishing a safe space (securing from physical, psychological, or emotional harm) with students/beneficiaries is of outmost importance and is secured via:

- Establishing a clear communication code of conduct (avoiding microaggressions)
- Addressing racism and stereotyping
- Establishing a collaborative work environment where all students are expected to achieve the highest performance.
- Addressing challenging behaviors as teachable moments
- Fostering a strong sense of belonging in the pedagogical process (via harnessing students' lifeworlds).
- Using micro-affirmations (active listening, affirming emotions, recognize/validate students' experiences)

3. *If one wants to teach about subjects like gender equality and sexuality in the multicultural classroom it is impossible not to be critical of some aspects of the culture of pupils of immigrant origin. Yet, this risks that pupils of immigrant origin feel being stigmatized and their cultural background not respected. This makes teaching sex education in the multicultural classroom one of the most challenging things to do and requires specific competencies in intercultural mediation. We find it encouraging that the program contains practical activities to exercise these competencies.*

Response/Action
Our focus is to bring in the programme contemporary debates on the politics and pedagogy of gender and sexuality and their intersection with cultural diversity and/or migration. Our purpose is inter alia to bring to the surface harmful sexual or gender inequality cultural practices. What past research has shown is that education plays a critical role in combating such practices. However, our goal is to empower teachers to confront such practices by the use of mediation strategies and techniques in order not to stigmatise immigrant pupils, nor disrespect their cultural backgrounds.

The purpose of discussing gender issues is not to be judgmental but to unfold all different aspects involved to enhance critical thinking and train students to be responsive in diverse cultural settings. Mediation is about respecting cultural backgrounds of parties involved in association with basic human rights and legal frameworks is place.

4. *Culture is a central concept in a programme on intercultural education and mediation. In several courses Hofstede's model is used. We were told that Hofstede's model was only meant as a start, but if the intention is to teach students a dynamic conception of cultures, as evolving, and as internally divided, with dissident voices, then Hofstede is not a lucky choice, as his model represents cultures as static, closed national systems. There are alternatives (e.g. Phillips, A. (2009) Multiculturalism without culture. Princeton University Press).*

Response/Action

The goal of this programme is to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on various theoretical frameworks of culture. From the very first course, the 'Theory and Practice of Intercultural Education', we examine the typology of educational models developed for addressing cultural diversity, including monoculturalism, multiculturalism, and interculturalism. We examine inter alia the ways culture and cultural identity is defined by each model. We also engage in a debate about postmodern arguments about the turn towards genuine or authentic interculturalism, which emphasises cultural exchange and cultural hybridity. We thus seek to engage students in a debate about the dichotomy between cultural essentialism (pointing out that different communities have separate, self-contained and unified cultural identities) versus cultural hybridity (suggesting the dynamic character of cultures, which are an unstable mixture of not only sameness, but also otherness).

Despite criticism Hofstede's model incorporates some basic dimensions of culture which can provide a good analytical tool for a generic comparison among various national cultures. This comparison can facilitate discussion amongst students on the existing diversification within national cultures and denote their dynamic nature in globalizing contexts. The goal of using this model is to declare that not all individuals in a nation possess and share the same cultural traits, but this will be extracted from students themselves. The culture comparison also serves the purpose of discussing widely spread stereotyping ascribed to national cultures.

Our intention is not to project this model as the only one but to give a controversial basis on which culture can be discussed. We intend to address this point by including other theories on culture in course readings such as Hall's monochronic/polychronic and low/high context cultures, emic/etic approach, Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck model, Condon & Yousef model, and

Phillips suggestions on culture. The dichotomies used by some models to describe culture are mere instruments for analyzing them and expand our understanding on this fluid concept.

5. *The analysis of the study guides results in some uneven balance of the appropriate activities for fostering interaction and collaboration in online learning environments. Once the programme starts, particular attention has to be paid to this balance, guaranteeing similar possibilities in all the different courses.*

Response/Action

For the development of all the courses included in the curriculum of the programme, we followed DIPAE's guideline. We included interactive exercises, Web 2.0 tools (e.g. Wikis, Paddlet) and forum discussions to foster interaction and collaboration in online learning environments. Nonetheless, these activities change according to the nature and the content of each course. Once the programme starts, the e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit (ePSU) of the University of Nicosia will be providing support to all the lecturers of the programme in order to constantly enrich the activities in their courses to ensure further interactivity and collaboration.

3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

The Master's in in Intercultural Education and Mediation has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section.

The EEC has confirmed that:

1. There is a very good balance between junior and senior staff in the participating departments at both universities. The number of staff is currently entirely adequate to support the programme of study.
2. Research-led teaching is being practiced which ensures the students are being taught the latest findings from the research staff carry out. The synergies of teaching and research are very good.
3. Students assess each course every semester. Content, facilities, distance learning, teachers, teaching material are being assessed by the students. Staff receive the feedback anonymously. At the end of term a summary of the assessment is given to staff. There is also a self-assessment option at Nicosia.
4. The pedagogical unit at Nicosia offers continuous professional development (CPD) courses for staff. All staff must be literate using the e-learning platform. Every year there is a schedule of CPD courses that staff can avail of. At Patras, there is a similar offering.
5. Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the core and elective courses offered on this joint MEd programme.
6. A distinguished guest seminar series is offered at the University of Nicosia. There are also plans to co-host synchronous sessions with external visitors (subtitled). Staff are open to including visiting professors from abroad.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. *Recognized visiting professors (who teach in English) should be built into the programme, preferably in the form of guest lectures in all the existing modules. It is good to have a distinguished guest seminar series but all students should be more systematically exposed to (English-speaking) guest lecturers and to international senior professors in the subject matter.*

   Response/Action

   Even though the language of instruction will be Greek we make clear to students that part of the studied materials will be in English for that we require a strong English language command. It is our intension to utilize scholars from abroad with whom we have close research collaboration. For example, we intend to invite in various courses guest scholars and we also plan to organize a seminar series with distinguished scholars.

Similar practice was followed very successfully in our other joint programme in Special Education
https://www.unic.ac.cy/eduseries2021-22/

2. *Although staff must be literate using the e-learning platform, no online teaching skills or experience are required in the selection of the teachers. A stronger approach on the methodological approaches on online teaching and learning would be recommendable.*

Response/Action

We offer trainings on online teaching skills to all new teaching staff members. The coordination of these training and support services is done by the "Faculty Training and Development Unit (FTDU)." Although many of our new teaching staff members already have basic (and in some cases advanced) teaching skills, we offer all the necessary training (pedagogical and technology skills trainings) to all new lecturers before they begin teaching any of our online courses. We also provide continuous support to our teaching staff. Depending on the type of training or support, teaching staff members are directed to the relevant unit/s.

The units involved in teaching staff training and support are:

1. e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit (ePSU)
2. Pedagogical Support Unit (ePSU)
3. TELC (Technology Enhanced Learning Centre)
4. DL-LMS Unit (Distance Learning - Learning Management Systems Unit

Specifically, and as mentioned to the EEC during the presentation by the Director of the e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit (ePSU), we offer two relevant series of trainings to our lecturers, one on pedagogical skills and one on technology skills (for all teaching technologies used in the programme). For details, please refer to the above mentioned presentation that was shared with the EEC.

Regarding the methodological approaches on online teaching and learning, the "Pedagogical Model for e-Learning" presents in detail all the methodological approaches on online teaching and learning which are based on current literature on pedagogy, online learning and e-learning. The model is revised periodically and when needed by relevant units and we welcome any specific recommendations for its improvement.

Link to the "Pedagogical Model for e-Learning": https://www.unic.ac.cy/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UNIC-Distance-Learning-Pedagogical-Model.pdf

Briefly, the Pedagogical Model for e-Learning is guided by the standards and guidelines of publications by quality assurance bodies and agencies, such us CYQAA, ENQA, ASG and EADTU. It employs the 21st century skills framework, emphasizing the high-level operational knowledge, competencies and personality qualities. Skills and competencies necessary to the 21st century citizen to survive and thrive. Such skills are: scientific and technological literacy, problem solving, critical thinking, metacognition, ability to work collaboratively, think creatively, synthesize information. The theoretical foundations of our pedagogical model for e-learning combine Brain Based approaches to learning with elements from the Multimodal Distributed Learning Model, Conversational Learning Model (which highlights interactivity elements in a course), Metacognition, Relevance and Authentic Assessment.

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

The Master's in in Intercultural Education and Mediation has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section.

The EEC has confirmed that:

1. The University's electronic system seems to work well and so according to the different stakeholders interviewed, namely students, teaching staff and administrators. These monitoring processes are in place to address students' progress, requests and/or concerns of both students and staff.

2. There is a clear explanation of the different courses available and how they operate, whether a student is full-time or part-time when following the distance learning programme.

3. Students believe that the admission requirements to enrol in a program are appropriate, they feel prepared and supported enough by the administrative staff throughout this process.

4. Students state that are being adequate supported and advised by the teaching staff and by the administrative staff.

5. The student's workload is balanced. The students mentioned that they manage to address all the requirements of the course.

6. Students are adequately informed about the online services available to them (E-Learning facilities/computer labs/library support, student career services/alumni services, etc)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

There are no recommendations for improvements

5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

The Master's in Intercultural Education and Mediation has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section.

The EEC has confirmed that the programme is well structured with sufficient attention to detail in terms of learning and teaching resources with a variety of tools and approaches used as the course unfolds.

The EEC has further confirmed that there are some established mechanisms and technologies that support interaction between staff and students, mainly through online platform and the use of computer mediated communication.

The EEC has also confirmed that the library offers both hard and electronic copies of academic texts and research literature.

Finally, the EEC has confirmed that the academic staff are either permanent professors or adjunct staff. The number of administrative staff appears to be adequate for delivery of this programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. *The virtual learning environment offers opportunities for further interaction in online courses. However, the EEC has not seen examples of innovative use of technology such as computer simulations, virtual or augmented reality embedded in the programme online environment.*

   Response/Action

   In our courses we employ a variety of interactive tools and methods to ensure three types of interaction:

   1. Student-to-teacher interaction:
      - Asynchronously through Moodle tools (i.e. discussion forums, char) and via email
      - Synchronously via teleconferencing (i.e. Webex)
   2. Student-to-student interaction: Through tools such as discussion forums, wikis, padlets.
   3. Students-to-content interaction: Though tools such as interactive quizzes, interactive presentations, audiovisual contents and multimedia.

      We would like to note that we are in a continuous process of further development of our virtual and multimedia educational material.

2. *The EEC recommends that there is a clear student facing narrative on how the learning environment integrates online components so that students truly benefit from the online learning environment.*

Response/Action

Our Narrative: A seamless experience when navigating in the learning environment benefits students by offering them easier access to all course material, directly improving the learning experience and indirectly improving learning outcomes. A better students/user experience increases the amount of time students are willing spend in the learning environment interacting with the material, the lecture and other students and indirectly improving learning outcomes.

Our learning environment/learning management system (Moodle) is the one place where students can find all the course material, requirements, assignments etc., interact with the lecturer and other students and collaborate with other students. All online components and tools needed to complete any course activities (reading material, audio-visual material, assignments, collaboration, video conferencing etc.) are integrated in our learning management system (Moodle) so that students can easily access everything they need for a course when they are in the Moodle page of the particular course.

We implement a standard core course template for all our courses so that the core structure of all our courses is similar, offering a familiarity effect that makes it easier for students to spot any of the elements of each course they need. For example, study guides are aways on the top of the page, upcoming videoconference sessions by the lecture are in the top right of the page, all material is divided by week or unit etc.

Further, a standard feature we implement is the notifications and reminders that are automatically sent from the learning management system to the student email to alert them about activities in the LMS, i.e. when a new announcement is posted the LMS.

3. *There is a need for providing more international literature (i.e. academic articles, books, etc) to students instead of Greek papers.*

Response/Action

Even though the language of instruction will be the Greek language, we make clear to students that part of the studied materials will be in English for that we require a strong English language command.
All courses include English language bibliography and in all course assignments, students are encouraged to use articles from major journals in their area.

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4. *An initial induction session or course on how to study and take advantage of the students' effort in an online setting would be of valuable added value for the students.*

Response/Action

We are finalizing the preparation of a comprehensive Induction Course for students that brings together all the information needed so that students can access it whenever they want regardless of their location. We aim at Launching the Induction Course in Summer 2022.

The course includes (a) general information about the university, (b) training videos for our platforms, (c) training materials and guides for student services, library access, plagiarism, coursework, final exams etc., (d) study skills sessions, (e) key contact details as well, (f) academic policies.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
   (ALL ESG)

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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
   (ALL ESG)

The Master's in Intercultural Education and Mediation has been considered to be fully compliant in all criteria of this section.

The EEC has confirmed that:

1. The curriculum structure is purposeful and the administrative plan of action is appropriate.
2. The terms of the joint programme are clearly identified and are built on an existing collaboration of the two universities. The distribution of funds and duties is transparent.
3. The admission requirements and student progression expectations are clearly defined.
3. The quality assurance processes are detailed and comprehensive.
4. The language policy is transparent. While the main language of instruction will be Greek, certain enriching activities may be offered in English (with concurrent interpretation or closed captions).
5. There are considerations for accommodating the needs of different groups of students (e.g. asynchronous instruction with optional synchronous participation).

6. The joint programme is an important step in the further internationalization of the focal institutions, with potential for new collaborations in research and teaching.

7. Because of the strong emphasis in intercultural education and mediation, along with the integration of a practicum experiences, the degree is designed to increase the employability of its graduates within and beyond formal education, and beyond national borders. The existing bilateral agreements that exist with governmental bodies (e.g. Greek General Secretariat for Citizenship) and NGOs expand the scope of this programme beyond the formal educational sector.

8. The option that students have to choose a research project could result in important scholar contributions to the field.

9. The design of the programme has the potential to contribute strongly to the tearing down of cultural barriers, both personal and institutional, as it is based on a critical analysis of societal structures.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

   1. *The division of responsibilities at all levels (curricular, financial, service-related, administrative and so forth) is for the most part transparent, although it seems that it is not split equally among partners. As the growth of this programme is anticipated, it may be wise to solidify a detailed plan for the division of duties between the two universities in an aim to promote a cohesive framework for students and further illustrate the collaborative spirit of its creators. Perhaps, co-teaching arrangements among professors from Cyprus and Greece could assist in such an endeavour.*

Response/Action

The programme is managed by a three-member committee, the coordinator of the programme and two faculty members (one from the University of Nicosia and one from the University of Patras). The University of Nicosia is responsible for the general administration of the programme and the University of Patras is responsible for the practicum. The two Universities have an excellent collaboration and communication. We run together another joint programme in Special Education without any problems in our collaboration.
The suggestion of the EEC for co-teaching arrangements is well noted and we will try to implement it from the very beginning of the programme.

2. *Regarding the practicum, given the anticipated growth of this program, it may be wise to create very clear expectations of professional contact, along with policies/practices on how potential problems can be addressed. Given that practicum experiences are expected to be in different geographic locations, clearly communicated guidelines with the partners/field supervisors in advance of placements could assist in smooth transitions. This is especially important given that issues associated with cross-cultural communication can be quite complex in nature.*

Response/Action

Communication code and professional contact will be addressed in the detailed MOUs that will be signed with the various Practicum partners. Practicum Coordinator will draft such a framework, and this will be discussed with selected partners so to include all possible problem resolutions and code of partnership/ethics.

3. *The sequence of classes is carefully built. As the programme is implemented and evaluated, it may be a good idea to revisit the stand-alone practicum. Perhaps, practicum experiences could be integrated earlier in the programme, in order to promote the cultivation of reflective practitioners throughout. Cultivating cultural competence and expertise is a lengthy process, after all.*

Response/Action
Reflective activities are spread throughout the course program so to enhance this competence. Students are required to work in groups where reflexively responding to weekly activities (scenarios, case studies, role plays). Practicum experiences, thus, are integrated in this weekly work as students are reinforced to bring practical examples to support their academic learning. However, this will be further stressed so weekly interactivity be more reflexive and based on real world settings. Practicum in the last semester will give students

the chance to apply academic knowledge acquired in the previous courses in a more elaborate way.

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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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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 two Universities 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 the pedagogical foundations of the programme and expand upon the content of the application form.

The EEC has confirmed that:

- *The MEd in Intercultural Education and Mediation is an ambitious and excellent Distance Learning programme between the University of Nicosia in Cyprus and the University of Patras in Greece.*

- *Students are very positive about the university, they talked about active interaction with the teachers. Staff are very responsive to student emails and requests and there is a great deal of guidance and support.*

- *(they) were highly satisfied with how the two universities have organized and monitored their educational programmes. Our impression is that both institutions are very well organized and that the staff of both universities are very dedicated and committed to their students. The joint programme corresponds with the EQF and is compliant across all areas of evaluation.*

We have assessed and reviewed carefully the EEC report. We are pleased to note that the report is very positive, and we thank the EEC for their positive comments. We also thank the EEC for its clear positive evaluation.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Prof. Panayiotis Angelides	Professor, member of the coordinating body of the joint programme	
Dr Christina Hadjisoteriou	Associate Professor, member of the coordinating body of the joint programme	
Dr Eugenia Arvanitis	Associate Professor, member of the coordinating body of the joint programme	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: 6/5/2022