

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 07/06/2024

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia, University of Padova, University of Torino, Catholic University of Uruguay

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Θρησκεία, Πολιτισμός και Δημόσια Ζωή (3 έτη / 180 ECTS, Κοινό Διδακτορικό Πρόγραμμα)

In English:

Religion, Culture and Public Life (ReCuPL) (3 years / 180 ECTS, Doctoral Degree (Joint PhD Programme))

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** New programme of study
- **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 concluded that the underlying policy, design, the principles and processes of quality assurance meet the standards of the European Qualifications Framework and good practice of the leading world universities. It further found that the leadership and staff of these universities are involved in the design, approval and subsequent evaluation of the programme. The University of Nicosia also provided evidence of upholding the principles of EDI in the institution's policies regarding academic staff and students. It was further noted that the programme is highly timely and reflects the public need worldwide for multidisciplinary expertise in issues related to religious diversity and its accommodation within political and legal structures and processes, and in the multifaceted expressions of religion in public life in different social contexts. The proposed courses are designed to use the existing academic strengths of participant universities to enable students' engagement with the world-class research in areas such as religion and law and the sociological aspects of religious freedom. EEC also appreciated the evidence of wider public engagement of PhD students at the Department of Law at the University of Nicosia, such as involvement in an academic journal and debates on contemporary issues of religion and society.

The EEC listed as strengths of the programme, its collaborative nature, enhanced student mobility, its focus on issues and themes of considerable public importance, multi- and inter-disciplinarity, diversity of perspectives, opportunities for PhD students to engage in public debates on a variety of themes, and a reasonably good post-PhD career prospects for students.

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The EEC would like to see stronger evidence of the processes in place to secure better coordination and consistency between overall policies, processes and implementation of the EDI principles between the participant institutions.</p>	<p>The EEC has noted that there is full compliance with EDI rules and policies, but made suggestions for further improvement. We welcome the recommendation of the EEC, and this will be seriously taken into account in the implementation of the curriculum. We appreciate that this is a suggestion related to the way in which skills are accumulated from one course to the next, and therefore do not require any changes in the programme, but rather the proper implementation of the framework during the life of the programme, so no specific changes are suggested to the programme itself. The collaborating institutions will ensure that the recommendations will be implemented during the life of the</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>programme. As discussed during the visit, and as noted by the EEC, the partner institutions have in force a distinct policy on EDI, which will be implemented and constantly monitored by the Academic Board.</p>	
<p>We recommend that the leadership of the RECuPL initiate discussions regarding updating its curricula to engage with the themes raised from the decolonial perspective. This is especially important considering the programme’s overall focus on religion, cultural diversity and public engagement.</p>	<p>The recommendation of the EEC is very well received. We note that the suggestion is to initiate discussions at the level of the Academic Board in order to further enrich the curriculum of the programme, which is already fully compliant, so as to engage with themes raised from the decolonial perspective. This is a recommendation relating to the life of the programme and does not necessitate any immediate change to the curriculum. As the EEC correctly notes itself, the objective of the recommendation is to initiate discussions at the Academic Board level. We note that this is a recommendation that can be implemented with the existing structure of the programme and refers to the life of the programme. The Academic Board will initiate discussions so as to better implement this suggestion during the life of the programme. For this purpose, the Academic Board of the programme will discuss the ways to include these critical perspectives in the didactic activities for 2025-26 (since the didactic activities for 2024-25 are already fixed); additionally, it will consider the possibility of incorporating them even sooner into the workshops, conferences, and seminars for 2024-25, that are not yet scheduled. The HEI and the Coordinating Partner fully endorse the need to engage with pressing questions regarding the decolonisation of the educational curricula, aiming to understand the knowledge systems and experiences of different communities and marginalised</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



	groups and to actively respond to their needs and aspirations.	
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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

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 was impressed by the emphasis put by the HEI and the representative of the University of Padua on the intersections between programme content and social development of the student. It concluded that the HEI is committed to providing an international education which fosters multicultural values in the student body. Reports by students, who were involved in the PhD programme, which will be succeeded by the programme under consideration highlighted the value of the international and multicultural education experience on which the new programme will build on. It was noted that the programme creatively combines compulsory core modules in the first year, and complementary modules, chosen by the students in their second year of study, with other education components such as conferences, seminars, and summer schools. The EEC appreciated that they did not just meet staff currently teaching on the programme, but also those who will become involved in the future, as this clearly indicated the evolving and dynamic nature of the programme. It further noted that processes to support student development and welfare, address the challenges of EDI, and consider students' complaints are in place.

The EEC listed as strengths of the programme, cutting edge technology platforms, equipment and resources, the compulsory minimum of three-months stay at one of the partner institutions which will contribute significantly to the students' social and individual development and enhance their autonomy as persons and researchers. Students have the opportunity to get actively involved in research and to publish in accredited journals, while taking part in seminars and academic events, which is something that helps the academic career path of students. It was noted that the launch of the new Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life seems particularly innovative. Former students spoke highly of the value of the student-supervisor relationship. Moreover, the intended co-supervisor arrangements, according to which co-supervision is always provided by two supervisors based at two different partner institutions, will further strengthen the supervisor-student relationship intellectually and socially and provide a form of additional support mechanism should problems occur.

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Even though we were assured that individual supervisors monitor student progress very closely, the EEC would encourage establishing a reporting system which captures progress and potential problems at least every six months; this would protect students' as well as supervisors' interests.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for this recommendation. We note that this is a recommendation for implementation during the life of the programme. The EEC acknowledges that the programme is already compliant, but makes suggestions for further improvement. The Academic Board of the programme will discuss how to properly introduce a reporting system of the PhD students per semester, providing an overview of their research advancements, challenges faced, and any support they may need. This is to be</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>implemented effectively once the programme begins. It is to be noted that the University of Nicosia already has in place a very detailed monitoring process of doctoral students, as provided for in the University's doctoral regulations, submitted to the EEC.</p>	
<p>External examiners may be involved at an earlier stage to decide about students progressing from one year to the next.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for this recommendation. According to the International Agreement, external evaluators play a key role for the admission at the final exam. The Academic Board will further explore the possibility of involving external evaluators at an earlier stage to help it decide about students' admission from one year of the programme to the next one, ultimately ensuring that this action aligns with the institutions' objectives. It is noted, however, that the Academic Board already includes a number of external members, so implementation of this recommendation is already in effect.</p>	
<p>There are still many things that can be done to promote academic collaboration in the classroom such as Interdisciplinary courses offered by teaching staff from different universities; co-teaching can be easily facilitated thanks to the excellent facilities at the HEI.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for this recommendation. Interdisciplinarity is at the heart of the PhD programme. As such, it should be reflected in the profile of the courses offered therein and in efforts of co-teaching by the staff from different universities. Definitely, there are always many things that can be done. And this is a new programme so there are many things that will be done during the life of the programme in order to further improve it, and the positive recommendations of the EEC are helpful in this regard so as to guide future work of the Academic Board and the partner institutions. The recommendation for 'inter-university' teaching is well received. Of course, such initiatives presuppose the establishment of relations among the academic staff.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>Building these relations is expected to be achieved gradually, paving the way for increased collaboration in the subsequent years of the PhD programme. So, we acknowledge that this is a suggestion that will guide our work in future years, in order to consider further improvements to the programme.</p>	
<p>The EEC is concerned that the academic workload of the first year of study is quite heavy, taking in consideration that students must take their degree in three years. Thus, the decongestion of the first year will help to students to focus more on their thesis and finish in time.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for this comment. While the students are full time and should be able to attend the heavy workload of the first year, we note the concern raised by the EEC, which warrants careful consideration. To address it, the Academic Board will monitor carefully the participation of students during the first year of study, and if there are indeed problems with the heavy workload, it will immediately take corrective action, and may potentially revise the distribution of activities and research percentages in the first and second years, aiming for a more balanced allocation of these components across both years. So, the comment of the EEC will guide our monitoring of the first years of implementation of the programme, and if necessary, corrective action will be immediately taken by the Academic Board.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Even though the HEI has a compelling EDI plan in place, the EEC strongly encourages that the RECuPL convenors work actively toward the creation of a more diverse student bodies. Regarding the composition of the PhD cohort of the previous PhD programme, the term “international” seemed to stand for “diverse” which often is not the case.</p>	<p>We note the helpful comment of the EEC. The call for applications in the PhD programme is a call open to everyone. It is true that while all potential measures have been taken in order to best disseminate the call for applications, and to ensure the most diverse and international student composition, the ReCuPL convenors cannot possibly control the backgrounds from which applications will arise. In any event, once applications are received, the selection process will seriously take into account EDI considerations to give opportunities to talented</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	people from the widest pool and create a diverse student body.	
As there seems to be a connection between teaching content and attractiveness of a programme to students, the EEC strongly recommends developing and incorporating courses into the programme from the fields of postcolonial and disability studies as well as queer theory.	We thank the EEC for this recommendation. We note that this is a recommendation for implementation during the life of the programme. The EEC acknowledges that the programme is already compliant, but makes suggestions for further improvement. The Academic Board of the programme will discuss how to properly introduce a reporting system of the PhD students per semester, providing an overview of their research advancements, challenges faced, and any support they may need.	Choose level of compliance:
The human rights component of the course should take an inclusive approach to the consideration of the protected categories beyond faith, including among others gender, gender identity and sexual orientation.	We thank the EEC for this comment. We note that this is also a recommendation for implementation during the life of the programme. Beginning from the second academic year, the design of module 1 of the didactic activities (Religion and Law) –where the human rights component of the programme is primarily found– will encompass more protected characteristics as per the recommendation of the EEC. In this connection it is noticeable that module 1 already goes in that direction, when it addresses for example in one of its limbs, LAW 1, issues of compound discrimination that women of a religious minority may suffer, precisely because of their religion, gender and minority belonging.	

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 concluded that the participant institutions have academic staff capable of delivering the programme to the high HEI standards. The staff involved in the programme are highly qualified and capable of offering diverse expertise, securing multi-disciplinarity and wide coverage of relevant themes and issues. For instance, the University of Nicosia and Padova have complementary expertise in Law and Sociology of Religion respectively. Representatives of these universities pointed out the practice of connecting their research with PhD teaching and supervision. This was deemed to be especially important to enhance multi-disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity within this programme. The EEC also saw evidence of engaging students in evaluating teaching and consequently analysing students' feedback at the universities of Nicosia and Padova. The EEC also appreciated evidence of post-PhD career opportunities for early career academics some of whom are planned to be involved in the teaching within ReCuPL.

The EEC listed as strengths of the programme, multi-disciplinary expertise of the academic staff, high academic qualifications of the staff involved in the programme, evidence of engaging students in various aspects of the teaching process, care for post-PhD trajectories of students

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>We recommend that the programme should seek to diversify its academic staff according to the EDI principles. The need for diversification also applies to recruitment of staff with more varied academic expertise in the relevant research areas, e.g. Religious Studies.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for this recommendation. We note that the academic faculty already includes faculty of partner institutions hailing from three countries and four academic institutions. Therefore, there are already academic staff that originate from countries such as Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Uruguay and others. We acknowledge that this does not preclude further diversification from faculty, and this can be achieved during the life of the programme with the inclusion of members of supervising committees or teaching staff hailing from diverse environment and expertise as suggested by the EEC. The Academic Board will consider how to best implement this recommendation during the life of the programme.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>It is highly recommended that relevant current and former PhD students get involved in the</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for this recommendation. It is noted that student participation takes place at</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>developing of this programme across all participant universities.</p>	<p>all levels of monitoring and assessment of the programme through the participation of student representatives in quality assurance committees. Once the programme is operational, its students will further be engaged through focus groups, feedback sessions, and advisory roles, ensuring their insights and experiences directly inform the curriculum development process. In this connection, it is to be noted that the Internal Programme Evaluation Process applied by the University of Nicosia, as already listed in the application, expressly provides for student participation in the Internal Team of Reviewers which is set up for the evaluation of a functioning programme post accreditation.</p>	
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

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 concluded that the admission requirements are clearly set out. The selection process and selection criteria are dictated by the University of Padova and national (Italian) rules. While this ensures a single and hence universal procedure throughout the consortium, the international dimension of the study is vouched for by way of the Selection Committee, which will consist of members of all four universities – thus was elaborated to the EEC during the site visit. Through this single, centralised enrolment process, PhD students are formally enrolled at all four universities. Student progress is monitored in various ways. As far as the compulsory courses are concerned, students receive pass/no pass marks, which strikes the EEC as an adequate and manageable approach. The EEC has no observations regarding student recognition and student diploma, adequate procedures appear to be in place in these areas.

The EEC listed as strengths of the programme, clear and uniform admission procedures, that selection committees involve representatives of all four partaking universities, a concerted effort, and that standard enrolment at all four universities concerned, testament to the collaborative and international nature of the programme

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Internationalisation may be enhanced as far as the supervisory modalities are concerned, i.e. regarding the monitoring of students' research progress. Specifically, the EEC advises that as far as the PhD topics allow - and it is submitted that these typically will so, as there exists rich expertise at all four universities on the subject matter of Religion, Culture and Public Life – supervisory committees consist of co-supervisors drafted from more than one partaking universities. This modality forges intensive research collaboration as a matter of course.</p>	<p>The recommendation of the EEC is well received, and indeed this is one of the objectives of the collaborating effort. As this is a suggestion for the life of the programme, the Academic Board, deciding on the appointment of supervisor and co-supervisor(s) for the students of the programme, will do their best to follow the recommendation of the EEC on setting up mixed supervision committees consisting of members of different universities, provided that the topic of the PhD so permits. Indeed, 'this modality forges intensive research collaboration as a matter of course' and also potentially lays the ground for the much-desired co-teaching.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

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 concluded that PhD students, their research, needs, and future careers, clearly are at the heart and centre of the programme. Committed supervisors are in place, access to teaching technology and research resources are provided by the HEI. The EEC welcomes the HEI's EDI strategy and the excellent support for students with special needs provided through the Centre for Research and Counselling Services (KESY). Students' international education and mobility is encouraged and students are inspired to approach their research question in an interdisciplinary manner.

The EEC listed as strengths of the programme, that in addition to the universities being well-equipped and provide quality online teaching, they have good facilities and shared library databases for students in all four of the universities. Teaching seems to be flexible and does address the special needs of students. Also, the HEI has good welfare provisions for psychological help and counselling of students. Moreover, human support resources, e.g. provided by supervisors, are adequate to support the study programme and to help the students. PhD students from the preceding programme gave quite positive feedback on their supervisors. The HEI provided evidence of commitment to support PhD students on the programme through administrative and teaching staff already employed.

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
While the universities seem to have welfare systems in place, most of the students are not aware of them. Communication could clearly be enhanced.	We thank the EEC for this comment. All participating universities already have communication mechanisms in place regarding welfare services. To improve accessibility, this information will be made easily available through the central site of the programme (https://www.phd-recupl.eu/), including links and resources from all participating universities. We note that the programme has not yet began, and therefore this is a suggestion to be implemented immediately once the first students are enrolled.	Choose level of compliance:
Bureaucratic hurdles that students are facing when moving from one university to another need to be addressed.	We thank the EEC for this comment. Indeed, the partner universities are aware of bureaucratic hurdles that sometimes may be in place with regards to moving of students. Indeed, this is obviously not within the partners' control, but to the extent of the university partners' abilities, effective measures are in	Choose level of compliance:

	<p>place to cope with this issue. The programme provides for administrative contact persons in each university, already known to students before they plan their mobility. The administrative contact persons will provide support and assistance to facilitate smooth and efficient transition from one university to another.</p>	
<p>Further consideration should be given to the specific needs faced by students with disabilities. Assurance should be sought from all partner institutions that the same support mechanisms for students with disabilities will be available at all partner institutions. This is especially crucial regarding the mobility of students with disabilities when moving between partner institutions regarding access to specific therapeutic and medical support.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for this comment. The Coordinating University (UNIPD) will work closely with all Partner Universities to ensure that consistent support mechanisms for students with disabilities are available across the board. UNIC already implements a comprehensive ‘Policy on Students with Special Needs’ (https://www.unic.ac.cy/useful-resources/students-with-special-educational-needs-manual/), which outlines support mechanisms and accommodations available to students with disabilities. The same is true with regards to partner universities. So, this is a question of implementation of existing policies once students are enrolled in the programme.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Three of the four partner institutions should have established EDI strategies in accordance with European law. If the Catholic University of Uruguay is not in possession of a similar strategy, the European programme convenors should actively encourage such a strategy to be implemented there to provide a safe environment for the PhD students they are sending abroad.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for this comment. As already stated, the rules and policies in force at the UNIPD (the Coordinating Partner) currently set out an EDI strategy in accordance with EU law to which all the Partner Universities must adhere, <i>including</i> UCU. This approach should help address the concerns raised by the EEC about the lack of similar strategy in UCU.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

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 concluded that the selection criteria coincide with the regular admission criteria required by UniPd, the coordinating partner, as clearly set out by the international cooperation agreement. Overall, these procedures strike the EEC as sound and straightforward. The EEC finds that the guidelines on preparing and formatting the doctoral thesis are extensive and clear. The international cooperation agreement as well as the application materials clearly explain the supervisory structures, the role of the Academic Board, and the composition and competences of the Supervisory committees.

The EEC listed as strengths of the programme, clear and comprehensive guidelines on preparing and formatting the doctoral thesis.

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
While the nominal enrolment criteria and selection procedure is clearly elucidated, the EEC finds that more thought could go in spelling out the criteria that are used to shortlist or reject PhD proposal applications. Since the programme is interdisciplinary, inter-disciplinarity (alongside e.g. originality, academic and societal relevance) could be among the criteria.	We thank the EEC for this recommendation which is well-received. The criteria place importance on clarity of research objectives, methodological rigor, and, as the EEC emphasises, interdisciplinarity, originality and academic and societal relevance. We acknowledge that these could be further considered during the life of the programme as suggested by the EEC, and this will be considered by the Academic Board accordingly.	Choose level of compliance:
Mixed supervisory committees are recommended, composed of staff from the different partaking universities, thus enhancing collaboration	The recommendation of the EEC is well received, and has already been addressed above. Indeed, this is one of the objectives of the collaborating effort. As this is a suggestion for the life of the programme, the Academic Board, deciding on the appointment of supervisor and co-supervisor(s) for the students of the programme, will do their best to follow the recommendation of the EEC on setting up mixed supervision committees consisting of members of different universities, provided that the topic of the PhD so permits. Indeed, 'this modality forges intensive research collaboration as a	Choose level of compliance:



	matter of course' and also potentially lays the ground for the much-desired co-teaching.	
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

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 concluded that the Legal framework and cooperation agreement is overall sound, clear and adequate. The international cooperation agreement transparently identifies the objective of the collaboration between the four universities and identifies UniPd as coordinating partner, a partner – the EEC learned upon the site visit – with ample experience in this important role. The EEC finds that with respect to the joint programme and the added value of the joint programme, the programme's strength could be enhanced especially from an internationalization perspective.

The EEC listed as strengths of the programme, an adequate international cooperation agreement, transparently identifying the objective of the collaboration between the four universities and identifying UniPd as coordinating partner

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
inter-university teaching may be incorporated into the curriculum design, thus inserting the spirit of collaboration into the compulsory courses.	We thank the EEC for this recommendation, which has already been addressed above. The recommendation for 'inter-university' teaching is well received and will definitely be implemented during the life of the programme. Of course, such initiatives presuppose the establishment of relations among the academic staff. Building these relations is expected to be achieved gradually, paving the way for increased collaboration in the subsequent years of the PhD programme. So, we acknowledge that this is a suggestion that will guide our work in future years, in order to consider further improvements to the programme.	Choose level of compliance:
Supervisory committees could ensure that co-supervising modalities similarly designedly bring together the expertise from the various universities.	The recommendation of the EEC is well received and has already been addressed above. Indeed, this is one of the objectives of the collaborating effort. As this is a suggestion for the life of the programme, the Academic Board, deciding on the appointment of supervisor and co-supervisor(s) for the students of the programme, will	Choose level of compliance:

	<p>do their best to follow the recommendation of the EEC on setting up mixed supervision committees consisting of members of different universities, provided that the topic of the PhD so permits. Indeed, 'this modality forges intensive research collaboration as a matter of course' and also potentially lays the ground for the much-desired co-teaching.</p>	
<p>More generally, the EEC recommends that a high level of symmetry - in terms of the input by the 4 universities - ought to be aimed for throughout the various activities of the programme.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for this recommendation which refers to the life of the programme. We note that the programme is structured in a way where there is a leading and partner universities. All universities, however, have a significant input in the development and monitoring of all aspects of the programme through the participation of members in the Academic Board, supervising committees, and didactic activities. The Academic Board will consider during the life of the programme how to properly ensure the continuous implementation of this comment.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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 partner 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 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 concludes that they were overall deeply impressed by the ambition, content, and development of the programme. Particularly the emphasis on educating the next generation of researchers in the field of Religion in Public Life in an interdisciplinary and multicultural environment seems promising. It responds to the public and educational need in expertise related to the issues posed by the increasing religious diversity and cultural complexities of contemporary societies in different contexts.

We fully acknowledge that all programmes, especially new programmes, are always amenable to further improvement. 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 note, however, that all comments and suggestion of the EEC refer to the life of the programme and are considerations that need to be addressed during the life of the programme by the Academic Board, and which do not require immediate changes or corrective actions. Indeed, the programme has been deemed compliant in all aspects. We acknowledge that the Academic Board will work hard, with the suggestions of the EEC in mind, in order to implement them during the life of the programme, once its first students are enrolled. 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><i>Content of the programme:</i> The educational and intellectual content of the programme needs further consideration to engage with pressing questions regarding the decolonisation of educational curricula. This is especially important given the expressed international profile of the programme. This also applies to the consideration of multi- and interdisciplinarity, i.e. the inclusion of a wider variety of relevant disciplines and deeper collaboration between them.</p>	<p>The recommendation of the EEC is very well received, and has already been addressed above. We note that the suggestion is to initiate discussions at the level of the Academic Board in order to further enrich the curriculum of the programme, which is already fully compliant, so as to engage with themes raised from the decolonial perspective. This is a recommendation relating to the life of the programme and does not necessitate any immediate change to the curriculum. As the EEC correctly notes itself, the objective of the recommendation is to initiate discussions at the Academic Board level. We note that this is a recommendation that can be</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<p>implemented with the existing structure of the programme and refers to the life of the programme. The Academic Board will initiate discussions so as to better implement this suggestion during the life of the programme. For this purpose, the Academic Board of the programme will discuss the ways to include these critical perspectives in the didactic activities for 2025-26 (since the didactic activities for 2024-25 are already fixed); additionally, it will consider the possibility of incorporating them even sooner into the workshops, conferences, and seminars for 2024-25, that are not yet scheduled. The HEI and the Coordinating Partner fully endorse the need to engage with pressing questions regarding the decolonisation of the educational curricula, aiming to understand the knowledge systems and experiences of different communities and marginalised groups and to actively respond to their needs and aspirations</p>	
<p><i>Equality, Diversity & Inclusion:</i> We strongly recommend that the programme makes provisions for addressing the diversity of the cultural and educational needs present in contemporary society. This applies to its content, education approach, and welfare provision for PhD students.</p>	<p>We fully recognise the recurrent theme of EDI in the EEC’s report and we endorse its paramount importance. We have addressed these issues above. Please refer <i>supra</i> in this Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • under area 1 and area 5, regarding consistency in the implementation of EDI principles • under area 1, regarding the role of EDI principles in the shaping of the educational content of the programme • under area 2, regarding the role of EDI principles in the recruitment of the students of the programme • under area 3, regarding the role of EDI principles in the recruitment of the teaching staff of the programme 	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • under area 5, regarding the alignment of student support mechanisms to EDI principles 	
<p><i>International collaboration:</i> We suggest that the programme has great potential still to be realised for deepening the international collaboration between the partner universities involved. This refers to their participation in further developing the programme, collaborative teaching, including joint supervision and evaluation, as well as administrative procedures.</p>	<p>This recommendation is well received and has already addressed. Please refer <i>supra</i> in this Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • under area 7, regarding the participation of the partner universities in further developing the programme • under area 2, regarding collaborative teaching • under area 4, regarding joint supervision and evaluation • under area 5, regarding administrative procedures. 	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Achilles C. Emilianides	Dean	
Christina Ioannou	Associate Dean	
Christos Papastylianos	HoD	
Nikos Koumoutzis	Co-ordinator	

Date: 07/06/2024

