

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: Date.

- **Higher Education Institution:**
American University of Beirut Mediterraneo

- **Town:** Paphos

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

In Greek:

Ψυχολογία, 4 χρόνια, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο

In English:

Psychology (4 years/240 ECTS), BSc

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** new
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: N/A

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 American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of three sub-areas and “Partially Compliant” in one sub-area.

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: **“Most support services are centrally provisioned, and this makes sense given the relatively small size of the department. Courses are designed in a bottom-up fashion, taking the views of stakeholders (students and staff) into account. There are opportunities to challenge marks as part of a systematic attempt to avoid prejudice. Courses will be taught in English, assuring international access (and AUBM has a plan to attract international students). All modules are weighted 6 ECTS for a nominal 15 * 75 minutes’ instruction. This seems appropriate for the weighting, taking individual study time, and time preparing assignments, into account. A comprehensive website is in development.”**

EEC noted also that **“AUB has a strongly supportive culture with carefully thought-through and comprehensive QA, and we expect this to be reflected in AUBM with the specific appointment of a QA officer. Likewise, the VITA system is a noteworthy long-term planning instrument that has been detailed by AUBM all the way up to 2032. Forms for standard course evaluations are in place (Appendix 4), and elaborate procedures for comprehensive periodic program review are in place (Appendix 5/6).”**

| Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For official use Only |
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| The panel did not find detailed information about graduate destinations and career paths in the information presented, although we recognize that these would have been more relevant to AUB than to AUBM. Students from AUB were however satisfied with their career prospects, and strong ties with alumni are evident. | The Department will work with AUBM’s Office of Student Affairs to improve public information. We will publish career paths and graduate designations of psychology majors on our website in a dedicated section. We will also involve AUB alumni in the process and work more closely with career services – specific for psychology majors – of the Office of Student Affairs. AUB also hosts a job fair, organized by the Office of Student Affairs, every spring term. This will be replicated for AUBM, and the Psychology Department will play in active role in this event. | Choose an item. |
| It is also important for the public to have a complete website with all necessary information on programmes, faculty and support services. | AUB Mediterraneo developed and launched a fully-fledged website for the university that includes information on the department, the programs and the relevant courses per term and per year: https://aubmediterraneo.cy/ . In addition, the university created already social media pages on Facebook , Twitter , Instagram , and LinkedIn . The university confirms that every department will have its own page on the website to include information specific to the department. | Choose an item. |

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

The university is appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of two sub-areas and “Partially Compliant” in one sub-area.

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: *“The panel formed a positive impression of AUBM’s intentions towards teaching and student assessment. Much of this was gleaned from information concerning AUB, or from conversations with the competent and engaged teaching staff, both from Psychology and from the Institute of Liberal Arts, and also with AUB students....Methods of assessment, where elaborated in our meeting, appeared tailored to the courses’ learning outcomes. Individual needs are to be supported by a disability office, although we noted that the planned approach was reactive rather than proactive (i.e., adjustments were made on an ad-hoc basis rather than mainstreamed, which may be fully appropriate for the currently foreseen number of students). Access to buildings on the campus for students with disabilities is in line with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Research engagement is to be augmented via volunteer research support from interested students.”*

EEC commented that “We did not have access to examples of practical sessions, examination questions, marking rubrics, etc.”

Institution’s Response: We can provide the EEC with sample planned lectures and exam questions per course for the program.

EEC commented that “Planned course materials showed that a number of digital and other skills were likely to be developed. There were however some questions about whether the depth of specialised statistical training would be sufficient to support the high-quality research ambitions associated with the programme.”

Institution’s Response: During the presentation to the EEC, there seemed to be disagreement among members of the EEC themselves about the depth of specialized statistical training in the program of study. It appears that the opinion of only one member made it into the report. But that opinion was actively counter argued, not by the presenting Chair of AUBM’s Psychology Department, but another member of the EEC during the meeting, pointing out that the PSYC 288 course, in addition to the statistics course (PSYC 284) in the core program, is another element of the statistical training sequence. This PSYC 288 is also compulsory. We like to make this exact point here. When benchmarked programs in Europe and the U.S., the inclusion of the PSYC 288 course puts us at par in terms of methodology coverage. In addition, there is the 24 ECTS Independent Study course (PSYC 290), compulsory for all students, and the possibility to add additional and more specialized methodology courses that will be electives for those psychology majors who are interested in deepening their experimental training even further.

EEC noted that *“Considerable attention has been paid to the planning of teaching, and there is an awareness that the final details will depend on the successful recruitment of teaching faculty. Because the programme is predicated on a well-established programme in AUB, there is reason to believe that many “teething problems” which typically beset new academic programmes can be anticipated and, where practicable, avoided. Clearly, several good practices exist regarding positively impacting the community by blending guided student research and practice efforts, a traditional strength of AUB extended to AUBM.”*

| Areas of improvement and recommendations by EECS | Actions Taken by the Institution | For official use Only |
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| <p>Some course descriptions consisted of chapter lists from textbooks that were out-of-date... There is an opportunity in the medium-term to consider what might be done differently, or even better, than the programme at AUB, in order to develop a truly 21st-century and international Psychology programme.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to build on AUB's excellent societal engagement through the curriculum, perhaps through an "outreach"-style course, thus ensuring an integration of practice and theory in the psychology programme. Perhaps, a module that will connect the students with the community, under the title "Applications in Psychology and Field Experience".</p> | <p>The Department will update the textbook adoption for the courses that seemed out-of-date.</p> <p>In addition, the Department will consider adding an "outreach"-style course (for credits) to strengthen further the integration of practice and theory.</p> | <p>Choose an item.</p> |
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3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

(ESG 1.3)

The university is appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of the three sub-areas.

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***“The majority of teaching staff for this programme have not been hired yet. There are clear recruitment processes, and guidelines for assuring competence, encouraging academic development, and fostering links between teaching and research. That said, at the time of writing, these remain promissory and cannot be fully evaluated. For that reason, we confine ourselves to commenting on the recruitment and development plans for the department, although we note that the panel was impressed by the teaching staff in Psychology and in the General Education programme that they were able to meet.”***

The EEC noted that ***“There is a fully-developed and detailed recruitment plan and process, which, if successful, should stand the department in good stead. Overall, three carefully selected professors per area of specialisation seems adequate for the number of students envisioned. Planned time allocations for professors include 40% of time for research, which is in line with practice at R1 Universities in the USA and at major European Institutions. Careful periodic review of courses is planned, per course as well for the programme as a whole.”***

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| Careful attention is indicated with respect to the continuous development of teaching skills as the department develops, perhaps through the Centre for Teaching and Learning at AUB. We did not extensively discuss plans for visiting staff, but we would strongly encourage teaching and research exchange whenever possible to prevent stagnation over time. | As indicated in the application, all new hires are trained by the faculty and staff of the Institute for Liberal Arts to be equipped to promote and support high quality teaching and learning at the American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo in line with the mission of the University, particularly the university's commitment to excellence in teaching and the enablement of students to think independently and become life-long learners. AUB Mediterraneo will take the suggestion by ECC and utilize visiting faculty, which was planned already but not stressed on. | Choose an item. |

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

The university is appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of all four sub-areas.

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: *“Of note, this section is being completed before any students have been admitted, let alone progressed through the programme. Accordingly, our answers here are exclusively based on what is planned in the submitted documentation and presentations. Admission and progression standards, as currently planned, are all fully met. Specifically, admission is a function of both grades and SAT scores, which is designed to serve as a standardised metric of achievement as far as is possible. Progression rules for students appear to be well-described. Students who fail to gain the appropriate numbers of credits in an academic year will be required to extend their periods of study. Courses can be discontinued based on 40% of the grade total, giving students a degree of control over their academic progression.”*

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| The EEC did not suggest areas for improvements or recommendations. | We thank the EEC for their positive feedback. | Choose an item. |

5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

The university is appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of the four sub-areas.

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: *“The physical estate of AUBM is in development (Annex 7), although a temporary location has been sourced (Annex 4). This temporary space will provide adequate teaching and practical room for the relatively small number of students projected to join Psychology in 2023. Computer facilities are already in place, and there is a plan to provide dedicated eye-tracking and EEG facilities. The library has access to most major e-resources. Most support services are centrally provisioned, and this makes sense given the relatively small size of the department. Among these are student counselling, a Learning Centre, and a careers advisory service. The panel met representatives of these and other staff services and were impressed by the levels of service planned.”*

EEC also noted that *“AUB clearly has a student-centred culture, which we expect to replicate at AUBM. Student services are well-designed. The planned campus will improve what is already a pleasant temporary learning environment.”*

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| <p>Some AUB students mentioned that the careers service could be more proactive in showing them possible career paths, although they were quick to point out that faculty were extremely helpful in this eventuality.</p> <p>As mentioned elsewhere, there was some doubt about the method by which new textbooks can be procured for the library.</p> | <p>The Career Officer will guide the students in the multiple phases from teaching valuable professional development and life skills [such as generating CVs, among others] through workshops, to exposing them to companies and platforms to stay connected and informed, and to promote student success.</p> <p>In addition to providing the faculty and students with the needed online resources and e-books to facilitate teaching and research, the library also facilitates the procurement of local and foreign books, teaching materials, and paraphernalia. The library coordinates with every department to identify the books needed for teaching and the expected number of books. The library then procures for them whether the books were online or hard copy, and provides them to the students at cost. The library will also join the Cyprus Libraries Consortium to tap into its resources and also to contribute to it with the valuable resources at AUB Mediterraneo and AUB.</p> | <p>Choose an item.</p> |

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

| Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For official use Only |
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| The EEC did not suggest areas for improvements or recommendations. | NA | Choose an item. |

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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| NA | NA | Choose an item. |

B. Conclusions and final remarks

| Conclusions and final remarks by EEC | Actions Taken by the Institution | For official use Only |
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| <p>Starting a degree programme at the same time as a new department is a major undertaking. In the case of Psychology at AUBM, three key factors have convinced the panel that this undertaking is not only feasible, but is likely to succeed:</p> <p>First, the programme is supported by the existing strength of AUB, which means that the rules and processes are tried and tested, and the programme itself is an iteration of a previously successful degree.</p> <p>Second, the people the panel met, both academics and professional services staff, were palpably invested in the success of the enterprise.</p> <p>Third, there is a carefully staged plan for implementation, such that the department can grow as students progress from year to year, with risks carefully considered, assessed (Appendix 12/13), and mitigable at each stage of development. The major risks to the programme are the two types of recruitment. Student recruitment is necessary for the programme to succeed, and we have commented further in the department assessment. Staff recruitment matters not only in terms of number but in terms of specialism: The final shape of the programme offered will depend on the specialisms of the professors the department is able to recruit. Here, the panel sees an opportunity to appoint a methodologist, and perhaps to beef up the (R-based) methodological components of the programme to reflect current international</p> | <p>The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo expresses its sincere gratitude and appreciation to the members of the External Evaluation Committee for their time and effort in this thoughtful review. The university welcomes the EEC's suggested areas for improvements in its Evaluation Report that aim for the assurance of continuous improvement. The Department is particularly pleased/satisfied by getting "Compliant" rating by the EEC in 16 sub-areas, and 2 "Partially Compliant" in 2 sub-areas. The University has accepted the constructive comments and suggested areas for improvements put forward, and will address them during the implementation phase.</p> <p>The Department agrees that a dedicated methodologist will indeed be an asset to the Psychology Department, and we intend to add this to our hiring plan. This is in addition to keeping a pipeline of visiting professors in the department. The Department will adopt a more proactive approach to hosting visiting professors with a program that seeks individuals through advertisement as well as existing collaborative networks.</p> | <p>Choose an item.</p> |

trends in the discipline. Few details were offered of a programme for visiting professors, although we believe that this is planned. We would emphasise the importance of such a programme to ensure that there are continued fresh influences on the programme, helping to prevent stagnation in teaching as well as research. On a related note we indicated above that the course descriptions that we would expect to see once the programme is up and running should perhaps be reliant on up to date textbooks (we believe that this will happen naturally as new staff are appointed). An aspect of AUB which particularly impressed the panel was its four strands of societal engagement, and we hope that this will be replicated in AUBM. In fact we believe that there is an opportunity to build such engagement into the programme (as a credit-carrying course), which will act to strengthen the formal ties between theory and practice in the degree. At the meeting, the panel felt that the representatives of AUB and AUBM were welcoming, open, and transparent, and that they had a clear vision and a solid plan for the implementation of the new programme. We were impressed with everyone we met; and we feel that, under the guidance of Professors Wassim El Hajj and Arne Dietrich, the department, and the programme, will be in safe hands in their early stages. We wish AUBM every success in this new venture, and look forward with interest to hearing how things progress from here.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Position</i> | <i>Signature</i> |
|---------------------------|--|------------------|
| Dr. Wassim El Hajj | Rector | |
| Dr. Arne Dietrich | Vice-Rector and Psychology Dept. Chairperson | |
| Mrs. Rania Hussein | Strategy, and Risk | |
| Mrs. Boushra Rahal | Quality Assurance and Institutional Improvement | |
| Click to enter Name | Click to enter Position | |
| Click to enter Name | Click to enter Position | |

Date: December 27, 2022