Doc. 300.1.1

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report
(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**

  Cyprus Institute

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **School/Faculty (if applicable): STARC**

- **Department/ Sector:**

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

  In Greek:

  Επιστήμη και Τεχνολογία στην Αρχαιολογία και την Πολιτιστική Κληρονομιά (3 χρόνια, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)

  In English:

  Science and Technology in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (3 years, 180 ECTS, Doctoral Degree)

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

- **Programme's status:** PhD

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 2019" [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

On 2nd March 2021, a four panel External Evaluation Committee met (via Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions) with various staff members, students and graduates of the Cyprus Institute (CyI) to discuss their proposed PhD programme in Science and Technology in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (STARC).

We began the day with a presentation from the Provost, Professor George K. Christophides. Prof. Christophides explained in detail the regional importance of CyI and outlined its vision as a driving force of the "knowledge economy" in Cyprus, and in the wider region – with specific reference to the intermediary position of Cyprus between Europe and the Near East. Importantly for the purposes of our review, he expressed a desire to maintain stability of student numbers and, approximately, of the present staff/student ratio. We spoke also with Dr Chrysanthia Leontiou, who outlined for us the background and outline of the present application.

We then met with Dr Leontiou, and with Prof. Nikolas Bakirtzis, director of the programme. Dr Leontiou outlined the Graduate School for us, highlighting that it was not a "traditional" Department structure, but rather was a single interdisciplinary, collaborative and collegiate unit. She explained that the office of the Graduate School operates as a "backbone" for the whole structure. There are currently 88 students (71 PhD and 17 at Masters level), and 48 Faculty members. The Programme under review has 24 students currently. It was explained that a key feature of the proposed arrangement was a greater emphasis on credit for research, equivalent to 160 ECTS, with 20 credits derived from taught study (of which 10 ECTS mandatory and 10 ECTS electives). The CyI has made a strategic decision to steer Masters students towards the PhD by engaging with a "1+3" model, whereby Masters students are allowed access to the programme with some requirements reduced.

We then had an opportunity to have a detailed conversation with CyI's teaching staff. We discussed the benefits of scientific specialization versus those of engaging with a broader interdisciplinary background. We heard compelling stories of how the CyI's intellectual environment empowers students from a diverse range of backgrounds, both MSc and MA, to "dig deeper" into the application of specific types of technology and scientific method. It was noted – and this fact becomes a key feature of our review – that CyI is, at its heart, a research institution, and as such enables its students to gain research placements on (often externally funded) research projects, alongside staff members. Several innovative methods have been developed to ensure that the unique collaborative interdisciplinary character of the Institute is reflected in its teaching, for example through co-membership of supervision committees, participation in projects, sharing of expertise and so on. The excellent research infrastructure, including cutting-edge lab facilities, is crucial for the program and STARC's PhDs.

We quizzed the academic staff on whether they felt the traditional humanities PhD thesis was appropriate for the kind of research-led teaching that they do. We detected a clear recognition of the importance of the PhD thesis for career advancement, and as a vehicle for training in fundamental methods in the humanities (subsequently we learned that students are expected to publish a paper and have a further one in preparation, to obtain their qualification). However we also detected tensions that the kind of disciplinary bridging work the programme envisages in delivering doctoral teaching in this mode: there are many interesting ideas on display, but we felt they have a way to go before they achieve full maturity.

We then had the opportunity to speak to a representative group of students and graduates of the programme. In this meeting, there was clear evidence of the importance of fellowships and research placements (as TA's), with an expectation among the students we spoke to that these placements would be directly relevant to their research and can be continued over the full length of their PhD-trajectories. There appear to be *ad hoc* arrangements for funding travel and research costs, which seem to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the supervisor. We heard testimonies from the students of particular cases where they were learning methods from outside their own areas, applied to their own topis (for example the development of structural ontologies applied to art history). In general however, we had the impression that many of the conversations that enable these kinds of interdisciplinary connection are of an informal nature.

After this, we met with CyI's administrative support colleagues. We had the impression here of a well-formed, well-resourced and well managed team. It has grown considerably in the last few years, reflecting the expansion of CyI's programmes. However, it also seemed that many of the relationships upon which the successful and effective support it provides are relatively personal and informal. We had the impression that while this may work very well for the current shape and size of the programme, it would struggle to scale in the face of any further increases in size. However, the team expressed that a new digital administrative system offers crucial support in this respect.

We then discussed the facilities and environment that is in place to support the programme. We gained the impression that the Library – while effective in its scope, and conveniently located for the campus, is rather limited in size, and there seemed to be a fairly considerable reliance of academic staff's own personal libraries. This creates obvious concerns about sustainability.

In summary, we found the proposed programme to be excellent in its conception and design, to conform to international standards of teaching at doctoral level, to take account of employability and the learning outcomes available to students. We have full confidence in it, and in the ability of the staff we met, to deliver an excellent interdisciplinary doctoral student learning experience.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Dr Stuart Dunn	Reader in Spatial Humanities and Head of the Department of Digital Humanities	King's College London
Professor Achim Lichtenberger	Professor of Classical Archaeology and Director of the Archaeological Museum at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster	University of Münster
Professor Jan Kolen	Dean of the Faculty of Archaeology and Professor of Landscape Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.	University of Leiden
Ms. Savvina Hadjipanteli	Student	University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*
- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
  (a) *sub-areas*
  (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
  (c) *some questions that EEC may find useful.*
- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*
- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

  Findings

  A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

  Strengths

  A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

  Areas of improvement and recommendations

  A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*
- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*
- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

1.1 Policy for quality assurance
1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
1.3 Public information
1.4 Information management

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
  - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
  - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
  - *benefits from external expertise*
  - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
  - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
  - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
  - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*

- *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
- *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
- *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*
  - *qualification awarded*
  - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *pass rates*
  - *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***

- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The study programme has a formal status and corresponds to the EQF. It is well designed and offers students an overview about Archaeological Science and computational and digital developments in Cultural Heritage. The mandatory course is designed for the PhD programme while the elective courses can be chosen from a variety of options from both the MSc and the PhD programmes. It offers much flexibility (tailor-made programs) and the students are able to pursue their PhD research and studies according to their interests in specific specializations. Most of the workload is assigned to the writing of the dissertation. The programme has clear objectives and students have easy access to the relevant information. Expectations are clearly communicated to the students. There is a policy of quality assurance as well as institutional monitoring and review. Students are able to proceed smoothly and well-supervised. Students receive support and guidance for their respective career paths.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The major strength of the PhD programme is its unique interdisciplinarity in Archaeological Science and (digital and science-based) Cultural Heritage, the research focus, the excellent staff/student ratio and the dedication of the teachers to communicate with the students. A very low drop-out rate of students attests to the excellent admission criteria and the guidance throughout the study programme. The laboratory facilities assure a very strong practical component in the programme and cutting-edge scientific methodologies. The study programme attracts many students from abroad.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

A mandatory course in research ethics and scientific integrity should be considered for integration into the programme.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

2.2 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology
2.3 Practical training
2.4 Student assessment

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

CyI has a strong research-led teaching and learning ethos and is well placed to train the next generation of scholars in the field of cultural heritage and scientific archaeology. The staff is highly interdisciplinary, cutting across multiple fields, but we note that cultural-historical specialisations (comparted to applied heritage studies) , such as ancient history, art history (apart from architectural history) and historical archaeology, are somewhat underrepresented.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The teaching and learning of the STARC programme offer a highly successful model for an interdisciplinary PhD programme in the field of scientific archaeology and Digital Cultural Heritage. There is an excellent suite of practical training (both practicals in the labs and hands-on training with materials, methods and models), and availability of cutting-edge research infrastructure and tools.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

We note that the Comprehensive Examination at the end of the first year is the main requirement that must be met for progression. We were told that all students pass this exam, due to the extensive preparation of the Supervisory Committee. We advise them to review the form, status and role of this exam, and to consider whether a more substantive pass/fail model would be appropriate in practice to assure quality.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
2	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

3.1 **Teaching staff recruitment and development**
3.2 Teaching staff number and status
3.3 **Synergies of teaching and research**

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*

- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*
- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The teaching staff is adequately qualified to implement the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study program, and to ensure the quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning. Overall, the quality of both the program and staff involved is considered to be high. The scientific staff of CyI STARC forms a close community of engaged scholars and colleagues who perform in an excellent way – in research, teaching, and integrating these tasks within CyI STARC.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The teaching staff of STARC is diverse, international and interdisciplinary. They form a strong team of colleagues who collaborate closely to offer a high-quality program to their students. Scientific staff are furthermore very successful in obtaining research grants (Horizon Europe, Marie Curie ITN etc.) which is necessary for offering PhD students a research-intensive learning environment and (where possible) a position as research assistant. Research output is of high quality and clearly related to STARC's program, of which the students profit as well. The staff's network of international partnerships is well-developed so that students have ample opportunities to supplement their studies and research abroad. The committee furthermore classifies the synergy of teaching and research within STARC as excellent.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The only reason why "teaching staff recruitment and development" is considered "partially compliant" is the apparent lack of an explicit career development plan for scientific staff. The staff members themselves seem to be satisfied and confident with their position (as the interviews show), but a transparent and fair career development plan and corresponding HR policy, is of crucial importance to attract young talent and ensure work and career satisfaction for experienced staff. In particular, the EEC was not able to ascertain whether teaching excellence is fully reflected in CyI's promotion and tenure procedures. Such a transparent development plan is also necessary to ensure the scientific and social sustainability of the successful STARC community in the long term. The committee therefore strongly advises to develop such policies, including criteria for promotion, possibilities for tenure track positions and conditions for offering young academics a good starting position on the (international) job market.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
3	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

- 4.1 **Student admission, processes and criteria**
- 4.2 **Student progression**
- 4.3 **Student recognition**
- 4.4 **Student certification**

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Normal international standards of PhD admission apply, i.e. a Masters degree in an appropriate area is needed. Access policies are clear, transparent, and were available in the published handbook. There is a process of evaluation of incoming applications where two assessments of each are made, and a committee makes a recommendation to accept, request clarification, or reject. At the end of the first year the Comprehensive Examination assesses the student's progress, and at the end of the programme there is a formal viva examination. The assessment criteria are published in the handbook.
Students are admitted with both MA and MSc degrees. This fosters a culture of interdisciplinarity in CyI.
The present proposal entails a reduction in the taught component of the programme from 20 ECTS to 10.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The remarkably high completion rate suggests the process is functioning well; although we reiterate our observation above (Section 2) about the Comprehensive Examination being passed by everyone. All standards are publicly available. We were able to ascertain that students have a clear understanding of what

is expected of them in terms of their progression and certification. The committee structure which oversees certification and progression means that staff from different areas can input directly into a student's supervision, giving different disciplinary perspectives from which the students clearly benefit.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

We explored in some detail the limitations of the conventional humanities PhD thesis for a programme of this kind. We received a clear message from our visit that the exact form of the dissertation, and the role of published papers, is a "work in progress" but should remain flexible (depending on the nature of the research and the PhD's career perspective), and we would urge all members of the CyI community to continue the conversation about what interdisciplinary assessment should look like in an archaeological science and cultural heritage programme.

We would also urge CyI to clarify whether publication of an article in a peer-reviewed journal and submission of a second paper is a necessary requirement for completion of the programme. We understood this to be the case from our visit, but could find no reference to this requirement in the documentation.

While we acknowledge the remarkably high level of student satisfaction with the programme, we remain concerned that there is not a clear mechanism for dealing with student complaints or resolving disputes. Formal and informal relationships with supervisors are clearly central to this programme, and we understood that most problems are raised and solved with the supervisor in the first instance. The risk of a complaint about a supervisor arising in the future should, we feel, be addressed.

As with many other administrative areas of the programme, we feel the arrangements for admission, progression and certification function well at the present scale, but would struggle to cope with any further expansion.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
4	udent admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	udent recognition	Compliant
4.4	udent certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

Sub-areas

5.1 **Teaching and Learning resources**
5.2 **Physical resources**
5.3 **Human support resources**
5.4 **Student support**

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Adequate teaching and learning resources are available. The laboratories and the technical equipment including the IT infrastructure are outstanding and assure that students receive an up-to-date best practice education. Although the staff and student numbers of the Institute have increased considerably over the last years, the premises seem to be adequate and are constantly expanded. Human support resources are available, both on a formal institutional level as well as on an informal personal level (due to the small size of the institute). Students receive individual support by their supervisors.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The learning and research resources are outstanding and offer the students the opportunity to undertake original and individual research, making this a very competitive programme on an international level. The integration of students into research projects encourages students in their career as junior researchers. The EEC was also impressed by the strong financial support (tuition fee waiver, fellowships, research placements) that the institute offers to the PhD students

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The evaluation committee got the impression that the library resources could be improved, and that Library itself should be expanded, although it is obvious that Archaeological Sciences and Digital Cultural Heritage research bibliography mostly is available online. If the institution continues to grow, we further recommend that more formal HR processes be implemented.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
5	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

6. Additional for doctoral programmes *(ALL ESG)*

Sub-areas

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
  - *the examinations*
  - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
  - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
  - *the chapters that are contained*
  - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
  - *the minimum word limit*
  - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*

- *regular meetings*
- *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
- *support for writing research papers*
- *participation in conferences*

- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

We are satisfied that student selection criteria, details on the formatting and structure of the dissertations and arrangements for supervision committees all comply with the necessary standards and requirements. See above, section 4, for more detailed observations.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The programme is highly competitive, with stringent selection criteria. We learned that the acceptance rate is just 20%, and the student completion rate is exceptionally high.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

It was apparent that some resources are available to students for travel and other research costs, but this is ad hoc, and based on negotiation with individual supervisors. We would recommend that a set budget be made available for these purposes that is more equally accessible to all PhD's.
In general, current resourcing and staffing levels can support the teaching and learning model of STARC. However, it may not scale well in the face of future growth, and we would advise that the present staff/student ratio should not increase in the future.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***

6	Selection criteria and requirements	Compliant
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
6.3	Supervision and committees	Compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The EEC was highly impressed with the rigour, scientific quality, innovation and scope of the programme, and with the quality and interdisciplinarity of the enthusiastic staff. CyI has enjoyed remarkable success in international grant capture, and overall student satisfaction is extremely high. This gives us a high level of confidence in the application for this programme.

We identified some areas which CyI may wish to consider to make it even better, and to put it on a more robust footing. We consider these factors to be institutional and technical, rather than intellectual. Overall, the whole edifice functions extremely well at its present scale, but we note that it is unlikely to be able to expand much further in this model (although we are cognizant of the Provost's remarks that this is not the intention).

We also noted the overall emphasis on research excellence, and commend the emphasis we saw on integrating students in research practice. However, the fact that while there is a clear pathway for recognizing research excellence for staff (for example through tenure, promotion etc), the pathways for recognizing and rewarding excellent teaching are less clear. We recommend that CyI should consider making the career structure for staff clearer.

In tandem with this, an academic institution which relies to such an extent on external research income (and applies generous reduction in its fees to students on the back of this) is – however strong its track record – at some risk of events beyond its control. We would urge the CyI to keep this in mind. Finally, we were very greatly impressed by the apparently very high level of student satisfaction and low drop-out rate; but we had some concerns about the lack of detail with regard to robust systems for dealing with complaints and disputes that arise in any academic organization.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	*Signature*
Dr Stuart Dunn	
Professor Dr. Achim Lichtenberger	
Professor Dr. J. C. A. Kolen	
Ms. Savvina Hadjipanteli	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 3rd March 2021