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ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 10 June 2022

External Evaluation Report

(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
- **Higher Education Institution:**
European University Cyprus

- **Town: Nicosia**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable): School of Sciences**

- **Department/ Sector: Department: Life Sciences**

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

  In Greek:

"Άσκηση, Υγεία και Διατροφή (3 Έτη/180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)"

  In English:

  Exercise, Health and Nutrition (3 Years/180 ECTS, Doctor of Philosophy)

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

- **Programme's status:** New

Concentrations (if any):

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].

In the Greek language: Concentrations

In the English language: Concentrations

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In Greek: Concentrations
In English: Concentrations

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

This evaluation was undertaken remotely using the Zoom web-platform. Conducting a periodic review by virtual means presents some challenges but the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) were able to gain sufficient information to make informed judgement in all key areas of assessment. Some areas could not be assessed fully by an on-line virtual process (e.g. being able to see the facilities first-hand) but these are relatively few.

In all meetings throughout the day, there were productive discussions of current practice, concluding with a clear sense of receptiveness to our recommendations. The School and Department have made great strides in teaching and research over recent years and this success is to be commended. In addition, there are some very good examples of collaborations and partnerships with professional associations, rehabilitation/wellness centres, hospitals, and other universities (including international collaborations) that should provide a solid platform for collaborative PhD projects in the future.

There was no student representative on the EEC but it was agreed that documentation would be circulated to an appropriate student representative for their appraisal and comments prior to submission.

The EEC would like to extend its thanks to all who engaged in the evaluation process.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
John M Saxton	Professor and Head of Department.	University of Hull, UK
Borja Sañudo Corrales	Professor and Head of Department.	Universidad de Sevilla, Spain
J. Alfredo Martinez	Professor of Food Science and Nutrition	University of Navarra, Spain/IMDEA
Karatzaidou Charalambia	student	Cyprus University of Technology
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

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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.***

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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*

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- o *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
- o *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
- o *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*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *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*
- o *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:*
  - o *selection criteria*
  - o *intended learning outcomes*
  - o *qualification awarded*
  - o *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - o *pass rates*
  - o *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - o *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - o *key performance indicators*
  - o *profile of the student population*
  - o *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - o *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - o *learning resources and student support available*
  - o *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 programme has clearly stated objectives and coherent learning outcomes, which are detailed in written documents. The structure of the programme is clearly defined, quantifying the required workload of students in terms of ECTS. The policies are clear regarding admission criteria, language requirements, and recognition of prior learning. The programme academic staff demonstrate a high level of commitment, documented competences, relevant research experience and international visibility on the topics addressed by the programme. All Faculty staff are active as researchers and scholars.

Strengths

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

- A major strength of the program is the very enthusiastic and cooperative team of high-quality academic staff, with both scientific and clinical experience. Faculty have strong backgrounds as active researchers in specialist areas enabling them to provide good supervision for future PhD students. This programme is certain to benefit from such well-qualified and dedicated teachers.

- The programme is able to distinguish itself from other competing PhD programmes in nutrition and physical activity through its interdisciplinary focus, encompassing exercise, health and nutrition.

- The quality assurance programme (and its implementation) is robust.

- Foreign language support for non-Cypriot/Greek-speaking students brings much added value.

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.

- There should be an effort to clearly define the competitive advantage of the program. Aim to fully capitalise on the interdisciplinary nature of the programme (exercise, health and nutrition) in any marketing materials to distinguish it from the competition.

- Regarding the latter, topics for research projects should emphasise the interaction between exercise, nutrition and health. Intervention trials should be designed to incorporate innovative state-of-the-art methodologies and outcomes (e.g "precision medicine, machine learning, etc.).

- Some level of funding (either internal or external) will be needed to support the research costs of projects (as a minimum). This is particularly the case for projects with a biochemical/biomedical focus, where a budget for the analysis of biological samples will be vital.

- With respect to the latter, expanding collaborations with industrial partners is recommended. The needs of the labour market should be taken into account when designing research programmes to maintain the School's excellent employability record. Industrial collaborations could provide a route to employment for PhD graduates.

- The Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation is an important source of funding for research and may provide a route to PhD scholarship funding in the future (discussions suggested that there is a precedent for this and the time seems ripe for exploring potential). Building stronger links with industry may help this endeavour.

- Perhaps consider offering PhD students elective (optional) modules from Master's level programme(s) if they need more to develop more expertise in a particular discipline area.

- The programme could be marketed widely, with the aim to attract self-funding international students.

Recommendations for the Programme Manual:

- The course distribution per semester (Page 35) needs to be more detailed and explanatory regarding the student chronogram and possible overlapping topics/matters.

- The program structure and course description appear in several parts (page 34, Annex 1 and 2, Appendix1/2), However, Contents, Objectives, Learning Outcomes and methodology description regarding the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination (10 ECTS), Preparation and submission of a Dissertation Proposal (20 ECTS), PhD Fieldwork (90 ECTS) and PhD Dissertation (30 ECTS) only emerge in Annex 9, mostly describing format and qualitative requirements but with scarce academic/research guidelines. Does the structure/coordination of this document comply with the criteria of the Agency or does it need to be improved?

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

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

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

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
> **2.2 Practical training**
> **2.3 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.

The student representatives were very positive about the Department and the opportunities and support structures they were benefiting from.

Strengths

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

- Students appreciate the opportunities to undertake high-quality research in the laboratories and to interact with other PhD students in the School.

- There are opportunities for students to gain valuable (paid) teaching experience (i.e. laboratory or consultative tasks in undergraduate and/or postgraduate courses) as part of their PhD programme under the supervision of faculty staff.

- The ERASMUS charter is a valuable asset, providing opportunities for students to spend time studying (or researching) 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.

- Aim to capitalize on the ERASMUS Charter to provide PhD students with the opportunity to spend time in another laboratory overseas. This would bring huge added value to the PhD programme and could serve as an additional USP for the programme.

- A recommendation for the PhD programme Education could be to include more collaboration and interaction between students, for example with peer assessment (for example by organizing frequent seminars in which students have the opportunity to receive feedback from other colleagues).

- Coordinatiion with other PhD programs at UEC should be specifically described.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	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.

Teaching staff are well-qualified to teach and support this PhD programme. They reported their interest and commitment to implementing this new programme, feeling strongly that the programme is urgently needed to enable them to "grow" research in the Department and to enhance their research profile. Staff engage in robust programme review processes and demonstrate strong academic leadership.

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

- Teaching staff ensure that good systems and structures are in place to monitor and support the PhD student journey.

- Staff are engaged in a broad spectrum of research areas, ensuring a wide range of research topics can be provided within the department for PhD students, as well as teaching opportunities and other scholarly activities. The breadth of research activities (from population health to molecular studies) is highly appropriate for this new PhD programme.

- Some level of financial and other support (i.e. reduction of teaching hours) is possible and this helps staff to engage in research and PhD supervision. There are good examples of staff development activities, including workshops, seminars and colloquia/conferences.

- Teaching staff have good collaborative links with external partners and international researchers.

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 encourages the University and School to continue supporting opportunities for staff development in the area of research.

- Increasing the international visibility of the program (e.g. by attracting visiting scholars and international students) will lead to new staff/student development opportunities and will help to raise the research profile of the School and Department internationally.

- A programme of regular interdisciplinary seminars (e.g. monthly/bimonthly) would be particularly beneficial for this new programme, in terms of helping to highlight research synergies amongst staff from different Departments and thereby fostering the development of new interdisciplinary PhD supervisory teams.

- The obesity pandemic, and particularly the issue of child obesity, was cited as an important reason underpinning the need for this new programme and it is felt that projects in this and related areas (e.g. type 2 diabetes mellitus) would be important for ensuring alignment with national public health priorities.

- There are some very good examples of collaborations between Departmental staff and professional associations, rehabilitation/wellness centres, hospitals and other universities. However, the commercial sector (sports/fitness/nutrition/hydration products) could offer funding potential for future collaborative PhD projects, in terms of PhD scholarships and/or funding to meet the research costs of projects (particularly projects investigating biochemical/biomolecular pathways). The EEC recommends further developing collaborations and partnerships with industrial partners with a view to co-designing future PhD projects and expanding funding streams to support PhD research.

- A planned/delineated approach to managing students who struggle to complete components of the PhD programme in a timely way and to deal with student attrition. This could become an issue due to the heterogeneity of the students, i.e. students can have a very diverse profile (various fields of expertise), hence some subjects and/or tasks may be more difficult.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	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*

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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.

The student entry tariff and progression seem to be comparable with other Sport and Exercise Science programmes across Europe. The admission requirements and progression, recognition and certification policies are clear and well-defined in the programme documentation.

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

- Clear and robust policy for student progression to the dissertation and independent research element of the PhD programme.
- Strong commitment for student research to be subject to external expert peer-review via the publication of at least one peer-reviewed academic paper and presentation at two conferences during the PhD journey.

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 more detailed description of the career opportunities is recommended in the programme documentation (i.e., plans for the future). "*They may also work as consultants or experts in various*

companies or organizations of private or public interest and generally undertake the provision of high-quality services in each sector and aspect of Exercise, Health and Nutrition. (p17)"

- The EEC recommends that the Department/School makes every effort to maintain contact with its PhD graduates, as a means of understanding career destinations and providing "future career role models" for other students on the programme.

- The 10 credit modules (LFS700, LFS710 and EHN700) need to account for the different origin and backgrounds of PhD candidates. For students with sufficient expertise in these topics, could alternative modules be offered by collaboration with other PhD programmes within the EUC?

- It is important to have a good balance of PhD projects in the different domains of physical activity (sport, structured exercise and physical activity for health) to meet the needs of prospective students with different career aspirations.

- Planned/delineated approach to clarify the student opportunities within the health sector on this programme (i.e., hospital work experience). Please add more information that allows students to be clear about work/research opportunities in the health field.

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

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

A well-resourced PhD programme, with knowledgeable and experience staff, who demonstrate a highly commendable commitment to student support (academic, administrative and pastoral). Students are generally very satisfied with their learning experience and feel well-supported by departmental staff and student support services. There is effective communication with the teaching staff and personal tutors and student welfare is safeguarded. A competent team of administrators provide a good level of support to students and academic staff.

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

- The students have access to excellent library services providing support for open access publications.

- The physical facilities, which include state-of-the-art laboratories for research, are ideally suited to this new PhD programme.

- The commitment to co-publication of research findings between students and staff brings added value to the PhD journey and will have knock-on effects for employability.

- There is very good administrative support for students, including support for international students' visa application and processing.

- Excellent opportunities for students to engage in a wide variety of "extra-curricular activities" (including gaining teaching experience) related to their PhD studies.

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 would like to see further clarification regarding the use of laboratories belonging other departments. A case in point is the radiodiagnostics laboratory, which includes DEXA for measuring body composition parameters (e.g. body fat, lean body mass, bone mineral density). Access to this and other laboratories would be very valuable for future PhD projects within this programme.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
5.1	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
    6.2 Proposal and dissertation
    6.3 Supervision and committees

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*

- o *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
- o *support for writing research papers*
- o *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.

The procedure for submission and assessment the dissertation in described in detail and is satisfactory. An example of dissertation was examined and was found adequate by the EEC. The dissertation defense is linked to the publication of an original journal article and conference presentations, which brings added value to the programme. The comprehensive exam after the second semester provides a good indication of students' capability to proceed and finalise the programme of independent research. The topic of dissertations will be strongly aligned with the research expertise of academic supervisors, which will strengthen the relationship between supervisor and student and enhance the research profile of the academic staff.

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

- The range of possible dissertation topics possible is very broad due to the breadth of research interests and experience of the academic staff. This ranges from cohort studies of population health, through to smaller-scale mechanistic studies involving biomolecular analytic methods.

- It is understood that there is some level of internal funding available to support the costs of undertaking empirical research as part of PhD projects (i.e consumables funding, etc.).

- Some excellent international research collaborations were cited, providing opportunities for student exchange and collaborative high-impact research outputs.

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.

- Consideration should be given towards linking dissertation projects not only to the research expertise of the supervisors, but also to the professional practice of the students. In this way students learn not only to do academic research, but to also apply their research to their area of professional practice.

- The EEC recommends that guidance be provided on the maximum number of PhD students to be permitted for academic staff to ensure that there is equality of opportunity, in terms of PhD supervision, and that academic staff do not become overloaded with PhD supervision responsibilities.

- The EEC recommends that a programme of PhD supervisor training be implemented for all staff so that they are kept up-to-date with local policy regarding PhD supervision (e.g. PhD progression policy, frequency and documentation of supervisory meetings, bioethical considerations, funding support for projects, etc.) and this training be repeated at regular cycles (e.g. every 3 years). This will also help to ensure that there is consistency of PhD supervision "practice" across the Department and School.

- Informative comparisons about other PhD programs at UEC within the document would facilitate an understanding of the differences and synergies to aid integration.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
6.1	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 found all meetings to be very interactive and productive, with full engagement from all sections of the academic community, including the administrative support team and student representatives. A major strength for the proposed new programme was considered to be the very enthusiastic and cooperative team of highly-qualified academic staff, having both scientific and clinical research experience. The breadth of research expertise amongst academic staff was seen as a major strength, together with some excellent examples of partnerships and collaborations with professional associations, rehabilitation and wellness centres, hospitals and overseas universities. The ERASMUS charter provides a strong foundation for student exchange, in particular opportunities for PhD students to spend time in another laboratory (or other research setting) overseas, which has much potential to bring added value to the programme and to distinguish it from the competition. It is clear that students are well-supported academically and pastorally throughout their studies by departmental staff and student support services. Overall, the ECC were impressed by the high standards of student support, academic quality of the staff and research facilities offered by the Department and School. Our key recommendations are as follows:

- There should be an effort to clearly define the competitive advantage of the program. Aim to fully capitalise on the interdisciplinary nature of the programme (exercise, health and nutrition) in any marketing materials to distinguish it from the competition. Topics for research projects should

emphasise the interaction between exercise (in its different forms, i.e. sport, structured exercise, physical activity for health), nutrition and health.

- Some level of funding (either internal or external) will be needed to support the research costs of projects (as a minimum). This is particularly the case for projects with a biochemical/biomedical focus, where a budget for the analysis of biological samples will be vital. Expanding collaborations with industrial partners is recommended. Industrial collaborations could also provide a route to employment for PhD graduates. In addition, the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation is an important source of funding for research and may provide a route to PhD scholarship funding in the future. Building stronger links with industry may help this endeavour.

- Capitalize on the ERASMUS Charter to provide PhD students with the opportunity to spend time in another laboratory overseas. This would bring huge added value to the PhD programme and could serve as an additional USP for the programme.

- A programme of regular interdisciplinary seminars (e.g. monthly/bimonthly) would be particularly beneficial for this new programme, in terms of helping to highlight research synergies amongst staff from different Departments and thereby fostering the development of new interdisciplinary PhD supervisory teams.

- The obesity pandemic, and particularly the issue of child obesity, was cited as an important reason underpinning the need for this new programme and it is felt that projects in this and related areas (e.g. type 2 diabetes mellitus) would be important for ensuring alignment with national public health priorities. Access to the DEXA facilities could be particularly valuable for research projects within this domain.

- The EEC recommends that a programme of PhD supervisor training be implemented for all staff so that they are kept up-to-date with local policy regarding PhD supervision (e.g. PhD progression policy, frequency and documentation of supervisory meetings, bioethical considerations, funding support for projects, etc.) and this training be repeated at regular cycles (e.g. every 3 years). This will also help to ensure that there is consistency of PhD supervision "practice" across the Department and School.

- As there was no student representative on the ECC, we would recommend that this document is circulated to an appropriate student representative for their appraisal and comments prior to submission.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
John M Saxton	
Borja Sañudo Corrales	
J. Alfredo Martinez	
Karatzaidou Charalambia	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 10 June 2022