Doc. 300.1.1

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report

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

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

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Life and Health Sciences

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

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

In Greek:

Βιολογία του Ανθρώπου [4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο(BSc)]

In English:

Human Biology [4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor of Science (BSc)]

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

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: N/A
  In English: N/A

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the "Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws" of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The onsite visit took place on Monday July 7th, 2025 at the University of Nicosia. In a first session, the external evaluation committee met with officials of the university, the rector, Prof. Pouyioutas, the vice rector for academic affairs and Chair of Internal Quality Assurance Committee, Prof. Angelides, and the dean of the School of Life and Health Sciences, Prof. Felekkis. They provided detailed presentations about the Institution and the School structures.

In a second session, the head of the Department of Life Sciences, Prof. Andreou provided a detailed presentation about the Department structure.

In a third session, the Coordinator of the Human Biology Bachelor of Science presented the program in detail.

In all three sessions, there was ample time for discussion, which was used to get additional information.

These presentation sessions were followed by independent discussion rounds with i) members of the teaching staff, ii) external stakeholders, iii) students and graduates, and iv) members of the administrative staff.

Finally, the external evaluation committee could visit the premises of the institution, especially the teaching rooms (for theoretical and practical training) and research facilities.

There was a very open atmosphere, and all meetings were useful and informative.

A. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Ernst A. Wimmer	Dean of Studies of Faculty for Biology and Psychology	Georg-August-University Göttingen
Andrew B. Goryachev	Professor of Computational Cell Biology	University of Edinburgh
Luc Lens	Head of Department, Biology	Ghent University
Florentios Tsoukkas	BSc-Student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

B. 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:*
  - *is a part of the strategic management of the program.*
  - *focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study program.*
  - *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*
    - *is developed with input from industry leaders and other stakeholders (i.e. industry leaders, professional bodies/associations, social partners, NGO's, governmental agencies) to align with professional standards.*
    - *integrates employer surveys to adapt to evolving workplace demands.*
    - *regularly utilizes alumni feedback for long-term effectiveness assessment.*
    - *is published and implemented by all 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*

- o *Aligns course learning outcomes with student assessments using rubrics to ensure objectives are met.*
- o *Connects each course's aims and objectives with the programme's overall aims and objectives through mapping, aligning with the institutional strategy.*
- o *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
- o *benefits from external expertise*
- o *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)*
- o *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
- o *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
- o *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
- 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*
  - ▪ collaborates with industry experts for curriculum development.
  - ▪ conducts joint reviews with external academic specialists to maintain academic rigor.
  - ▪ performs periodic assessments with external stakeholders to ensure continuous alignment with market needs.
  - ▪ establishes collaboration with international educational institutions or/& other relevant international bodies for a global perspective.
  - ▪ conducts regular feedback sessions with local community leaders for societal relevance.

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*

- *qualification awarded*
- *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
- *pass rates*
- *learning opportunities available to the students*
- *graduate employment information*

In addition, the program has established mechanisms of transparency & communication to ensure that
- Professional bodies validate program descriptions and outcomes.
- Community leaders actively participate in ensuring that the program's public information is relevant and resonates with the local and societal context.
- External auditors review public information for accuracy & consistency vis-à-vis the actual implementation of the program.
- Industry-specific & societal information is regularly updated with expert inputs.
- Alumni testimonials are included for a realistic portrayal of program outcomes.

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed using specific indicators and data i.e:*
  - *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*
  - *industry trend analysis.*
  - *feedback mechanisms from external partners/stakeholders*
  - *data exchanges with professional networks*
  - *employer insights concerning career readiness*

- *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?*
- *How and to what extent are external stakeholders involved in the quality assurance process of the program?*
- *How is external stakeholder feedback gathered, analyzed and implemented?*
- *In what ways do external stakeholders assist in making program information publicly available?*
- *How do external stakeholders contribute to evaluating graduate success in the labor market and obtaining feedback on employment outcomes?*

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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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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.

Quality assurance is a key priority for the University of Nicosia, including within the Human Biology programme. The University aligns with the Bologna Process and adheres to European quality standards. Comprehensive information on quality assurance is outlined in the Human Biology programme's accreditation application, covering aspects such as teaching staff, student admissions, student well-being, and facilities.

The course content is academically sound and meets the expected standards. The programme began as a pioneering initiative in Cyprus and remains unique. It has been carefully structured to align with clearly defined learning outcomes, both at the programme level and for individual courses. Regular reviews are conducted, and up-to-date information regarding the curriculum, admission requirements, course credits, and descriptions is accessible on the University's website.

The University of Nicosia ranks highly in various global rankings. It has numerous international partnerships, including double-degree agreements, and attracts a significant number of international students. Its graduates are accepted into Master's programmes across Europe, reflecting the programme's compatibility with European educational standards. Instruction is offered in both English and Greek, and language courses are available to facilitate integration among local and international students.

Although it is a relatively young institution, the University of Nicosia employs academic staff with substantial teaching experience, many of whom have studied or worked at universities in English-speaking countries. The campus infrastructure is modern and well-maintained. The library emphasizes digital resources, ensuring convenient access for all students, including those studying remotely.

Strengths

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

1. The University of Nicosia demonstrates a strong commitment to internationalization, actively fostering partnerships with higher education institutions (HEIs) and implementing effective strategies for attracting international students.

2. The programme functions effectively, producing well-trained graduates who are equipped with the knowledge and skills required for further study or employment in relevant fields.

3. The curriculum is carefully designed to attract students by offering a well-balanced combination of biological and medical foundation courses, along with subjects that address sociological, societal, and

humanitarian issues. The programme remains unique in Cyprus, and the Human Health track stands out as a competitive option in both Cyprus and Greece.

4. Quality assurance is a core institutional priority, encompassing continuous professional development of teaching staff and systematic evaluation of student performance to ensure high academic standards.

5. The teaching staff possesses strong educational backgrounds and substantial teaching experience, often having trained or worked at universities in English-speaking countries.

6. The University provides robust access to electronic resources, including a wide range of e-books and digital tools, which support both on-campus and remote learners with flexible and up-to-date study materials.

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.

1. **Oral assessments should be subject to additional oversight.**

   At present, oral examinations or thesis presentations are typically assessed by a single examiner. In the interest of fairness and academic integrity, it is recommended that a second examiner be present during oral assessments - either physically or remotely - when possible.

   Recommendation: Ensure that oral examinations are evaluated by two academic staff members, with remote observation as an option if physical presence is not feasible.

2. **There is currently no required internship component in the programme.**

   Practical experience is increasingly valued by employers and graduate programmes. A structured internship course would provide students with relevant workplace exposure and reinforce their academic knowledge through real-world application.

   Recommendation: Establish an internship course as part of the curriculum and try to implement it as a mandatory course.

3. **The Bioinformatics course is currently elective.**

   In modern biomedical and biological research, bioinformatics skills are essential. All graduates of a Human Biology programme should be familiar with basic bioinformatics tools and data interpretation.

   Recommendation: Make the Bioinformatics course a mandatory part of the core curriculum.

4. **The programme currently includes two introductory biology courses.**

While both courses (*BIOL-110 General Biology I* and *BIOL-111 General Biology II*) are foundational, combining them into a single, integrated course could streamline the curriculum and allow space for additional specialized or skills-based courses.

Recommendation: Merge BIOL-110 and BIOL-111 into one comprehensive General Biology course.

5. **Blended learning approaches are not yet systematically integrated.**

The integration of online and face-to-face learning provides flexibility, accessibility, and pedagogical advantages.

Recommendation: Implement blended learning strategies across selected courses to enhance learning outcomes and accommodate diverse student needs.

6. **Student feedback implementation – reiterated recommendation.**

As already noted in a previous review, student feedback is not sufficiently integrated into programme development. This point deserves further emphasis.

Recommendation: Reiterate the importance of gathering, analyzing, and acting upon feedback from current and former students.
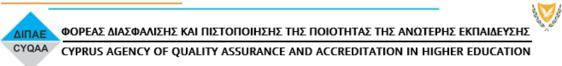
7. **Quality assurance is primarily handled internally - reiterated recommendation.**

Although the university has established quality assurance procedures, these are largely implemented by internal staff.

Recommendation: Increase transparency and incorporate external oversight by appointing formal external examiners for both individual courses and the overall programme.

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	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.*
- *Detailed schedules in course materials are included, explicitly stating the expected hours for lectures, self-study, and group projects, ensuring transparency in time allocation.*
- *A system is integrated where each learning activity is assigned a weight proportional to its importance and time requirement, aiding in balanced curriculum design.*

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.*

- *The expected hours for different components of practical training, such as lab work, fieldwork, and internships are clearly documented in the training manuals*
- *A weighting system is applied to various practical training elements, reflecting their significance in the overall learning outcomes and student workload.*

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.*
  - *The time allocation for each assessment task is explicitly stated in course outlines, ensuring students are aware of the expected workload.*
  - *A balanced assessment weighting strategy is implemented, considering the complexity and learning objectives of each task, to ensure fair evaluation of student performance.*

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 teaching and learning process at the University of Nicosia - and specifically within the Human Biology programme - is aligned with European standards and reflects common practices across higher education institutions in the EU. The curriculum, course content, assessment methods, and instructional delivery are well structured and have proven effective over several years of successful implementation.

The programme strongly emphasizes student-centred learning approaches. Most instructors have substantial experience in this area and apply a variety of teaching strategies, including modern pedagogical methods such as problem-based and case-based learning (PBL/CBL). The small class sizes (typically fewer than 20 students) create an interactive learning environment that allows instructors to develop close academic relationships with students, monitor individual progress effectively, and intervene when challenges arise. Administrative staff also play an active role in monitoring student progression, which helps minimize unnecessary delays in studies.

Where appropriate, practical skill development is integrated into theoretical instruction. Students engage in well-designed practical trainings throughout the programme, which effectively complement the academic content. This hands-on experience culminates in an extensive research project during the fourth year. This project is carefully structured: it begins with theoretical preparation on research methodology, continues with the development of a research proposal, and concludes with the execution of the approved project. Students are closely supervised throughout the process, and in some cases, the research outcomes contribute to scientific publications. Faculty members appear satisfied with the time allocated for student supervision and research engagement.

Assessment is carried out through a broad range of accepted methods, including midterm and final exams, written assignments, presentations, discussions, and analytical writing. This multifaceted evaluation approach provides a comprehensive view of student performance and exceeds standard assessment

practices in many programmes. The grading system is designed to enable timely and precise monitoring of academic progress.

Strengths

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

1. **Balanced theoretical and practical education:**

   Students in the Human Biology programme receive a comprehensive education that integrates both theoretical knowledge and practical application across key areas of the discipline.

2. **Modern, student-centred teaching methods:**

   The programme adopts contemporary pedagogical approaches that place the student at the centre of the learning process, encouraging critical thinking and active participation.

3. **Small-group teaching environment:**

   Instruction is delivered in relatively small groups - approximately 30-40 students in the programme, with a maximum of 20 students per class - which fosters a collaborative and respectful learning atmosphere. This structure allows instructors to build strong academic relationships with students and to monitor their individual progress closely. Students report feeling well-supported, heard, and personally attended to throughout their studies.

4. **Aligned assessment methods:**

   The programme employs a variety of assessment methods that are appropriately aligned with the learning objectives, ensuring fair and accurate evaluation of student performance.

5. **Development of laboratory and research skills:**

   Practical laboratory training is an integral part of the curriculum, culminating in a fourth-year research project. This project provides students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge in designing, proposing, and executing independent scientific research.

6. **Research-oriented practical training:**

   Beyond scheduled lab classes, the programme offers students meaningful exposure to research-oriented practical experiences. These opportunities help students develop scientific reasoning, technical skills, and familiarity with experimental procedures - essential preparation for postgraduate education or careers in biomedical research.

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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.

1. **The current assessment method for the course BIOL-491 (Undergraduate Thesis) lacks an oral component.**

   Presenting and defending a thesis proposal is a fundamental aspect of scientific training. At present, students are only required to submit a written proposal, without any formal oral presentation or defense.

   Recommendation: Introduce an oral examination component for BIOL-491, requiring students to formally present and defend their thesis proposal in front of academic staff.

2. **Lack of a formal mechanism for addressing student complaints beyond the course instructor level.**

   The external evaluation committee could not identify a clearly defined structure for handling student complaints at a level above that of the individual course instructor. In order to promote fairness and transparency, such a mechanism should be established and should include student representation.

   Recommendation: Develop a formal, transparent procedure for addressing student complaints beyond the instructor's level, including student representatives.

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.

The teaching personnel involved in the Programme meet the general expectations and quality standards set for higher education institutions across the European Union. Faculty members are academically well-qualified and possess diverse international experience, often having completed undergraduate, graduate, or postdoctoral training abroad. Several members of the teaching staff have also conducted research and taught in institutions across the United States, European Union, and the United Kingdom.

All instructors are engaged in research to some extent, with some actively participating in international research collaborations. At a minimum, all academic staff supervise student-led research projects during the fourth year of study, ensuring that students are exposed to the research process. Moreover, the level of English proficiency demonstrated by the faculty is high and fully aligned with the international profile of both the Programme and the University, as well as with the language-related demands of the curriculum.

Strengths

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

1. **Favourable student-to-staff ratio as a key strength of the programme:**

   One of the notable strengths of the Human Biology programme is its small cohort size, which allows for a low teacher-to-student ratio. This enables personalized instruction, close academic supervision, and strong engagement between students and faculty.

2. **Close collaboration among academic staff due to departmental scale:**

The relatively small size of both the Department and the School facilitates regular communication and close collaboration among faculty members, contributing to academic cohesion and effective programme coordination.

3. **Effective integration of adjunct faculty with strong teaching credentials:**

   The University makes strategic and efficient use of adjunct teaching staff. These instructors meet the required academic qualifications and, on average, bring substantial experience in higher education and in the use of contemporary, student-centered teaching approaches.

4. **Research engagement among faculty enriches programme content:**

   Teaching staff are actively involved in research, which contributes to keeping the curriculum up to date and aligned with current developments in the field.

5. **Institutional support for faculty research through workload policies:**

   The University encourages faculty research productivity by offering mechanisms such as teaching load reduction, enabling instructors to dedicate more time to scholarly work and publication.

6. **Undergraduate student involvement in research activities:**

   Faculty members actively engage undergraduate students in research, creating early exposure to scientific inquiry and contributing to the development of research skills within the student body. This has effectively resulted in co-authorships of undergraduates on publications in international peer-reviewed journals.

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.

1. **Continuous pedagogical development of teaching staff.**

   The external evaluation committee could not find clear evidence that the teaching staff systematically engage in ongoing training related to teaching methodology or professional development. In the context of a rapidly evolving educational and scientific landscape, maintaining and updating teaching skills is essential to ensure high-quality instruction. If not already in place, a structured system for regular pedagogical training should be introduced to support teaching excellence.

   Recommendation: Encourage and formalize regular participation of faculty members in pedagogical training and professional development activities.

2. **High proportion of part-time and adjunct teaching staff.**

The committee observed a considerable number of part-time and adjunct instructors within the programme. While this is common in higher education, it is crucial to ensure that such staffing patterns do not compromise coherence and continuity in course delivery and student experience.

Recommendation: Implement mechanisms to ensure consistent teaching quality and curricular alignment across all instructors.

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*

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 University of Nicosia maintains a clear and publicly available admissions policy, as outlined in the programme documentation and on its website. Admission requires successful completion of secondary education and proof of English language proficiency, while remedial courses are offered during the summer to help students meet academic standards. For international students, the University provides early support in securing accommodation, which is essential since a local address is required for entry into Cyprus.

When academic challenges arise, students are offered timely support through resits or additional instruction. The programme also allows flexibility, with a maximum duration of nine years to complete the degree, accommodating interruptions in study if needed. Graduating students receive a diploma supplement in line with international standards. While the University currently issues a single general-level degree, distinctions such as *cum laude* and *summa cum laude* are awarded to students who achieve exceptional academic performance.

However, two important issues remain. First, there is no clearly defined or published selection policy in place in case the number of applicants exceeds the programme's capacity. Second, without the provision of relevant data such as retention rates, graduation rates, or time-to-degree metrics, student progression within the programme is hard to evaluate.

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Strengths

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

1. The Human Biology programme is a unique academic offering in both Cyprus and Greece, providing students with a specialised curriculum that is not currently available elsewhere in the region. Upon completion, the programme enables graduates to pursue further academic studies internationally.
2. Students are supported throughout the admissions process, with the University offering guidance on application procedures and practical help in securing accommodation - an especially important service for international students.
3. The admissions process takes into account each applicant's prior education, ensuring that students are appropriately prepared for the academic demands of the programme.
4. Small class sizes contribute to a supportive and personalised learning environment. Students report feeling well cared for, with easy and informal access to both teaching and administrative staff, many of whom are available beyond scheduled hours for additional guidance and communication.

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.

1. **Lack of a clearly defined and published selection policy for oversubscription scenarios.**

   Currently, there is no formal policy or publicly accessible regulation describing the selection process in case the number of applicants exceeds the programme's intake capacity. A clear and pre-defined procedure is essential to ensure that admissions decisions are made according to objective criteria.

   Recommendation: Establish and publish a formal selection policy to be used in cases of oversubscription, outlining specific criteria and procedures.

2. **Inability to evaluate student progression due to lack of accessible data.**

   The evaluation committee was not provided with quantitative data regarding student progression - such as retention rates, graduation timelines, or dropout statistics.

   Recommendation: Systematically collect, analyze, and present student progression data such as year-to-year progression, on-time graduation, and withdrawal rates.

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	Partially compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

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

Sub-area

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.*
- *Students receive support in research-led teaching through engagement in research projects, mentorship from research-active faculty, and access to resources that enhance their research skills and critical engagement with current studies.*

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.

The University of Nicosia offers modern, well-maintained facilities that support a high-quality learning environment. For the Human Biology programme, all essential teaching and laboratory spaces are located within the Central Building, ensuring easy access for students. The University campus includes a range of lecture halls and smaller rooms suitable for group work, with several teaching spaces specifically designed for small-group instruction of fewer than 20 students, in line with the programme's pedagogical approach.

The library is located within short walking distance and provides excellent access to digital academic resources. Students benefit from a wide selection of e-books and online scientific databases, which support both coursework and independent study throughout the programme.

Additional student support is offered through the KESY (Center for Research and Counseling Services), which provides psychological and academic counseling. As part of its role, KESY allows students to access help quickly and efficiently, ensuring early intervention and personalized support where needed.

Strengths

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

1. The University of Nicosia benefits from a modern and purpose-built campus, located in a suburban area. The facilities, buildings, and learning spaces are up-to-date, well designed, and functionally compact.
2. Student accommodation, including dormitories and residences, is located nearby and is similarly modern, offering a high standard of living and convenience for students.
3. Students report reliable internet access throughout teaching facilities, contributing to an effective learning environment.
4. Academic and personal support for students is strong, including for those with special needs. The atmosphere is generally described as informal and personal, fostering well-being and satisfaction.
5. International students feel welcomed and included, and report a positive, inclusive campus culture with no experiences of xenophobia.

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.

1. **Regular revision and modernization of course materials.**

   It was noted that several course syllabi refer to older editions of textbooks, which may not reflect the most current scientific knowledge or teaching approaches.

   Recommendation: Review and revise syllabi on a regular basis, ensuring that the most recent editions of textbooks and teaching materials are consistently adopted.

2. **Apparent lack of an ombudsperson mechanism.**

   During the evaluation, no reference was found to an independent ombudsperson structure available to students. Such a mechanism plays a crucial role in ensuring fair resolution of conflicts, providing students with a neutral channel to express concerns and seek support outside the usual academic hierarchy.

   Recommendation: If not already present, establish an ombudsperson position or office to handle student complaints and mediate conflicts independently and confidentially.

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

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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*

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- 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?*
- *Are the criteria reflected in 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.

N/A

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

N/A

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.

N/A

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	Not applicable
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Not applicable
6.3	Supervision and committees	Not applicable

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C. 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 Human Biology Bachelor of Science programme at the University of Nicosia stands out as a unique and academically sound offering within Cyprus and the broader region. Designed in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), it combines solid theoretical foundations with practical and research-oriented training. Instruction is delivered by qualified and internationally experienced faculty, in modern facilities that support both in-person and digital learning. Small class sizes foster a student-centred environment that promotes close mentorship, active participation, and personalized support. The curriculum incorporates contemporary teaching methods, while students gain hands-on experience through well-structured laboratory work and a substantial final-year research project. The programme's strengths also include a clear focus on internationalisation and effective student support services. Students report positive academic and social experience, and graduates are well prepared for postgraduate studies or employment.

Nonetheless, several improvements are recommended. An oral component should be added to the undergraduate thesis defense assessment, and oral defenses in general should include a second examiner for greater transparency. The curriculum would further benefit from merging the two introductory biology courses, introducing an internship course, and making Bioinformatics a required subject. Blended learning strategies should be more systematically implemented, and student feedback should be more actively used in curriculum development. To enhance quality assurance, the appointment of external examiners and a formal complaints mechanism involving student representation are encouraged. Additionally, a publicly defined admissions policy for oversubscription scenarios is needed, along with systematic tracking of student progression data. Course syllabi should be regularly updated with current textbook editions, and teaching staff should engage in structured pedagogical training. Greater coherence should also be ensured across part-time and adjunct faculty.

In summary, the programme offers a strong academic foundation, modern infrastructure, and a clear commitment to quality education. The suggested improvements aim to reinforce these strengths and support the programme's continued development and recognition at a European and international level.

The external evaluation committee recommends re-accreditation of the Bachelor of Science programme in Human Biology.

D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Ernst A. Wimmer	
Andrew B. Goryachev	
Luc Lens	
Florentios Tsoukkas	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: July 8th, 2025