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Doc. 300.1.1

Date:

External Evaluation Report

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

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

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

- **Department/ Sector: Department of Life Sciences**
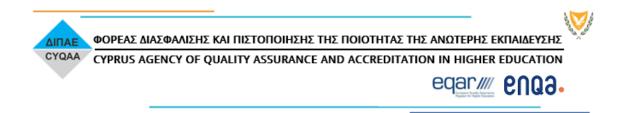
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

  In Greek:

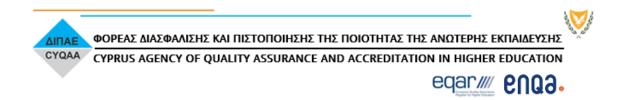 Βιολογια του Ανθρωπου

  In English:

  Human Biology (BSc,4 years, 240 ECTS)

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

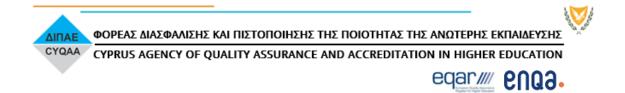- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The External Evaluation was online because the situation regarding Covid-19 prevented a visit on site. Information was obtained through presentations about the Institution, the School and Department structure, and by video information showing the relevant buildings and infrastructure. The members of the EEC were able to ask questions and collect information through meetings with:
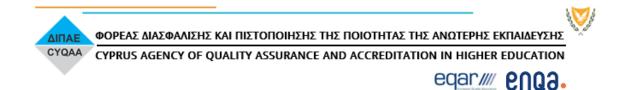
- The Rector, the Head of the Institution, and the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs.

- The members of the Internal Evaluation Committee.

- The Head of the Departments and Programme Coordinator.

- Members of the Teaching Staff.

- Students and Graduates.

- The Administrative Staff.

There was an open atmosphere and meetings were found to be useful and informative.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Edwin C.M. Mariman	Professor of Functional Genetics	Maastricht University
Andrew B. Goryachev	Professor of Computational Cell Biology	University of Edinburgh
Finn Skou Pedersen	Professor of Molecular Biology and Genetics	Aarhus University
Christina Papa	BSc-student	University of Cyprus

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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.
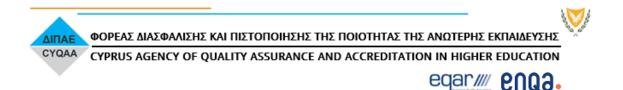
Strengths

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.***

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development
(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

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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

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1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

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

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

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

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

1.3 Public information

Standards

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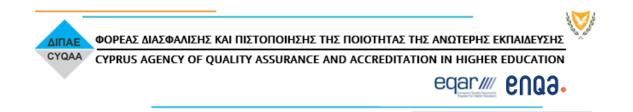 - *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

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

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

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

Findings

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

Quality assurance is high on the list of priorities of the University of Nicosia and this also applies to the programme of Human Biology. The standards for quality assurance adhere to the Bologna Process Declaration and generally follow all European guidelines. Detailed information on Quality Assurance is provided in the application for accreditation of the Human Biology Programme, including teaching personnel, student admission, progress and wellness, as well as infrastructure.

The content of the overall courses is adequate and reaches the required academic level. It started as a unique programme in Cyprus and it still is. The Programme has been carefully designed to meet the learning objectives, which are well defined in the application for the whole Programme and for each course individually. The Programme is periodically reviewed and all information pertaining to curricula, admission criteria, credits and courses is publicly available on the University website.

The University of Nicosia occupies considerably high places in various international rankings. There is a respectable number of agreements with other institutions worldwide for double degrees and the number of enrolled international students is high. Students from the University of Nicosia can enrol in Master's programmes in Europe confirming their European level of education. Teaching is in English as well as in Greek. Courses are available to learn these languages, which supports interaction between local and international students and allows international students to adjust to the local environment.

Although the University of Nicosia is a young university, the teaching personnel has a considerable number of years of experience in teaching. Most of them have spent time at other Universities in English speaking countries. The infrastructure is adequate and well taken care of. The library focusses on electronic books, which allows easy access for students including distant learners.
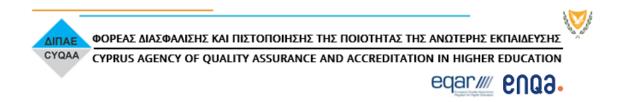
Strengths

1. The University shows pride in its strong internationalization policy with respect to relationships with HEI's as well as student recruitment

2.The Human Biology Programme was established recently and has already shown its viability through several years of operation

3.The Programme has been designed to appeal to students through the offering of a balance of biology and medicine preparatory courses together with courses on sociological, societal and humanitarian aspects. The programme is unique to Cyprus and the Human Health track is designed to be unique in Cyprus and Greece and is very competitive in the region.

4.Quality assurance is an essential policy of the University of Nicosia and involves updating the level of teachers and regularly monitoring the level of learners.

5.The teaching personnel is of high quality regarding experience in education.

6. The infrastructure is adequate to allow students to progress in their study.

7. All information including ECTS and learning outcomes regarding the programme is publicly available on the internet.

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 information about career possibilities could be improved. It is nowadays very important for students to know what their prospects are when they have successfully passed this program. The description is rather global.

Recommendation: Mention Master's studies by name at the University of Nicosia and in Cyprus for which this BSc forms an excellent basis.

2. The theoretical content of the programme seems to be mostly focussed on the biology of the organism with less attention given to the interaction of the organism with the environment.

Recommendation: The course on epidemiology is now elective, but it would be more appropriate to turn it into a regular course.

3. Student progression statistics is not available.

Recommendation: Increase information on actual student progression at least to the evaluators if not publicly, the level of success and drop-out rates.

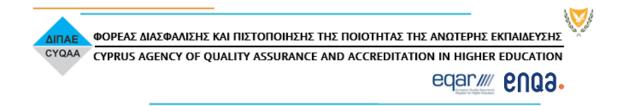4. Enhance the impact of student feedback.

Recommendation: Share feedback from the student cohorts already graduated from the programme.

5. Much of the quality assurance implementation depends directly on the local faculty and administration.

Recommendation: Introduce more transparency and openness to external advice, such as institution of formal external examiners for the individual courses and the Programme overall.

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.*

2.2 Practical training
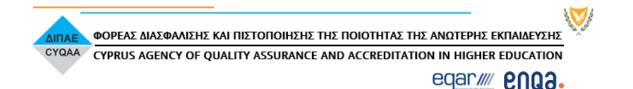
Standards

- *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.*

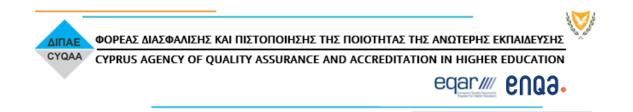**2.3 Student assessment**

Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*

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- *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.

Overall, the process of teaching and learning is in line with the European standards and all procedures discussed at the onsite meetings are typical for the university practice in the EU. The courses, their content, assessment structure and their practical delivery are well designed and are shown to work by several years of programme success.

The University of Nicosia, in particular also the programme Human Biology uses student-centred ways of teaching and learning. Most teaching personnel has a long experience in this direction. Student assessment by different methods is in place and allows to monitor the progress of individual students. From the programme description and from the meeting with the teaching personnel, administrative personnel and students it is obvious that modern teaching methods are used (for example PBL). Teaching is done in relatively small groups (<20 students) and this allows the teachers to know their students very well. This makes it easy to monitor their progress and signal problems. Progress is also monitored carefully be the administrative personnel. Together this prevents that students will suffer from unnecessary delay. Students can give feedback on the programme and also on teachers and can easily apply for resits in consultation with teachers. On the other hand, it was reported that official requests for students' feedback has only a 10-15% response making the data not useful.

At first sight, there may be overlap between various courses. The teaching personnel has clarified that some overlap is implemented on purpose because it indicates to the students that defined subjects can be studied from different angels and disciplines, providing a connection between these disciplines. Unnecessary overlap is avoided by checking syllabi of related courses.

Where possible, practical skills get sufficient attention and are intertwined with theory in various courses. It culminates in two long term projects in the 4th year. These projects have a logical makeup starting with the theoretical background of how to perform quality research, followed by the writing of a research proposal, and then the execution of the approved proposal. Teaching personnel supervises the students during research, which eventually may lead to scientific publications. The teaching personnel seems content with the time they have available for doing research.

Student assessment is done by various accepted methods like mid-term exam, final exam, assignments, presentations, discussions and writing which somewhat exceeds the typical practice. The grading system allows to closely and timely monitor the progress of students.

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

1. Students are educated in both theoretical and practical aspects of Human Biology.

2. Modern student-centered methods are used in teaching.

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3. Teaching is done in relatively small groups (30-40 student on the Programme, 20 students max per class session, small practical groups) allowing to build a teacher-student relation of trust and mutual respect and allows teachers to closely monitor the progress of the students. The students report feeling being heard, taken care of, and overall given enough personal attention.

4. Student assessment methods are in place and well aligned with the learning objectives of the programme.

5. There is an adequate part of the education devoted to develop lab skills and perform research, which is evidenced by the presence of two well developed research projects in the 4th year.

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. Students are educated in various competencies like knowledge, lab skills, academic writing and presenting, critical thinking, professional behaviour (give and accept feedback). It seems that progress is monitored mainly by the teachers in close contact with the students.

Recommendation: it would be advisable to install a system by which the progress on different competencies over time can be followed.

2. Presently all assurance of teaching and assessment quality lies with the lecturers and the common practice is that the "Greek" and "English" course organizers use each other's advice as the main source of external support and control.

Recommendation. It might be advised to institute more formal methods of quality assurance and approval via, for example, larger bodies, such as exam and curricular boards comprised of local faculty, as well as attraction of external examiners from other universities in Cyprus and EU.

3. The officially requested feedback from the students to the University has a low response (10-15%).

Recommendation: Part of the time of regular teaching activities should be dedicated for registering feedback by the students. This will improve the response.

4. Feedback to the students presently relies almost exclusively on the initiative of individual lecturers

Recommendation: Implement a central policy on feedback to students.

5. Although the students do a substantial number of in lab hours, further strengthening of laboratory practice is recommended as many courses in the Programme assume familiarity with lab equipment and modern lab methods.,

6. Most of the delivery of the course teaching and assessment lies on the shoulders of the lecturers who are also course organizers. They carry most of responsibility for material selection, ensuring quality, resolving overlaps and performing all student assessment. Typical teaching load is 15 hours per week, which leaves little time for research and postgraduate supervision.

Recommendation: Focus on balancing the teaching-load of individual staff.

7. Thesis projects are given to the individual students based on their total academic performance. However, some students might be talented in the laboratory and the research field or/and in specific courses but not have the highest grade among all the students. Therefore, they might lose the opportunity to have an experimental thesis project and work in a laboratory, which may affect their further studies since they will not have the required experience to proceed for a research Master's or PhD degree. An experimental research project will prepare them better for their future studies and for their career - if they are interested in a career in research-.

Recommendation: An alternative way could be to give the thesis projects to the students, based on the academic performance on the specific subjects, which are related to the thesis project that they are interested in. Moreover, for the experimental thesis project, it might be a good idea to select the students based on the performance in the laboratory classes, too. If resources allow, an even better solution would be to offer experimental laboratory projects to all interested students.

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.*

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- *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.*
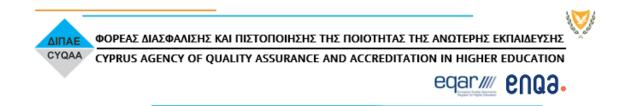
3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

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 recruitment of teaching personnel follows standard procedures shown to be effective. The teachers need to have an appropriate academic grade and experience with teaching and research. For special topics additional personnel is occasionally appointed. The University of Nicosia keeps the ratio between teachers with a permanent/full-time appointment, over teachers with a temporary/part-time appointment at an acceptable level of 50/50. This practice may not be entirely usual for the larger and older European universities but likely is a necessity of the very recently formed university in the small island nation. The ratio of teachers/students is kept low and is now about 1/20, which is very good and allows high quality monitoring of student progression.

The teaching staff on the Programme generally meets all the requirements and standards for HEIs in EU. The staff is well-trained and generally has a record of international experience in the form of undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral training. Some of the staff have also experience of research and teaching abroad in the US, Europe and UK. All teaching personnel has research experience and some of them are involved in international projects. The minimal involvement in research is by posting and executing a student research project for 4th year students. The demonstrated level of English language suggests fluency and proficiency and commensurate with the learning objectives and the highly international status of the Programme and the University overall.

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

1.The small size of the Programme and excellent teacher to student ratio is one of the major strengths of this Programme.

2.The small size of the Department and proposed new School ensures that all faculty have an opportunity to communicate and collaborate closely with each other.

3.The university makes effective use of adjunct staff members. Teaching personnel has the required academic qualifications and teachers have on average already ample experience in teaching and in applying modern teaching methods.

4. There is a system in place for schooling of teaching personnel (life-long learning) which is needed to keep the content of the programme up-to-date.

5. The teaching personnel is involved in research, which benefits the renewal of programme contents.

6. The University puts emphasis on the ability of its faculty to conduct research and publish and has a scheme of teaching load relief, provided the faculty obtains grants (from 15h/week to 9h/week).

7. Members of faculty actively involve their undergraduate and Master's level students in conducting research.

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. Based on the publication lists of the teaching personnel, the output in research is rather limited.

Recommendation: It could be evaluated if allowing more time on research for some teachers would be beneficial for (parts of) the programme Human Biology. Further reduction of teaching load by hiring additional faculty members might be considered to improve this situation.

2. Presently, teaching staff on the programme seems largely mono-national, with most, if not, faculty members being born in Cyprus or Greece.

Recommendation: Increase proportion of international members of staff to diversify the faculty in general and make the university more attractive to the international students.

3. Student feedback on faculty performance is generally unavailable to the evaluators and does not seem to play any major role in the faculty assessment and progression.

Recommendation: General strengthening of the student feedback is very much recommended.

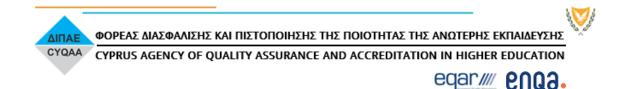**Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:**

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 has a clear regulation regarding admission of students and this information is explained in the application and available on the internet. The University has a policy of ensuring a level of necessary high school education and English level proficiency. Remedial courses are offered to enrolled students over the summer to catch up with the requirements. Students are assisted in an early stage to find proper accommodation. This is essential for international students, because the authorities request a local address upon entering Cyprus. Student progression is monitored on two levels, informally by the faculty that teaches the courses and, formally, by the two University-wide bodies: Academic Affairs and Academic Advising departments that have formal process in place (via regularly monitoring attendance and GPA In case of study delay, assistance from teachers with resits and extra lessons is readily available. The maximal term for the programme is 9 years meaning that students can stop their study for one or more semesters to spend time on other activities or even other programmes. Certification is accompanied by a diploma supplement in line with international standards. Currently university offers one general (unstratified) level of certificate upon graduation with two levels (cum laude and summa cum laude) reserved for the outstanding performance. The University has a good experience with BSc programmes in Sports and Dietetics.

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

1. The Programme Human Biology is unique in Cyprus and Greece and attracts many potential students.
2. The admission criteria are in place and have been published on the internet.
3. There is assistance for students regarding the admission and housing.
4. Prior-education is well taken into account in the admission process.
5. Student progression and education success are closely monitored by teaching and administrative personnel.
6. There is ample assistance for students with (learning) disabilities. Students generally find themselves well supported and report being treated informally and personally. They appear to have enough access to their teachers and administrators, who are available outside of hours for support and communication.
7. The certification of the University of Nicosia, including the programme Human Biology, gives access to international follow-up 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.

1.Incidentally, the existence of two streams of student progression monitoring might be also a weakness. Lecturers and teaching staff in general appear not to be fully aware of the central administrative system of monitoring and support provided by the Academic Affairs and Advising departments, possibly, because the two are fully centralized and service all Schools apart from Medical School, MBA, etc. who have their own bodies. As the university grows, decentralization of these services might be advisable to reduce separation between the faculty and administrative staff. The university generally failed to provide any information on the rate of failing, withdrawing and interrupted students, which is clearly a sensitive matter for the administration.

Recommendation. More transparency on these performance indicators can be recommended to go forward.

2. Currently, students have to choose their programme of study right from the outstart and the possibility of transfer is very low due to significant differences between the BSc programs.

Recommendation: More flexibility could be recommended to improve the student experience.

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.*
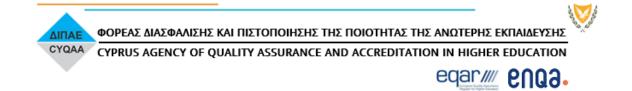
5.4 Student support

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.

Teaching and learning environments are adequate for a modern university, follow all EU standards and certification procedures and are highly appreciated by the students. Most courses use syllabi composed by teachers as well as (online) books and scientific articles. The teacher-made syllabi assure that the learning outcomes are taken into account and reached. For practical education there is a booklet of protocols.

The University has generally a very modern campus which is outfitted with a variety of auditoriums of variable size from large lecture rooms to small group study rooms For the programme Human Biology, the facilities needed to execute the programme are all located in the Central Building of the University. This includes teaching rooms and lab spaces. The library is within short walking distance. All at all, this provides an appropriate learning environment. Several teaching spaces cannot accommodate more than 20 students, which is in line with the policy of the programme to perform teaching with small groups of students. One of the challenges typical to modern universities in small nations – the existence of student cohorts with multiple languages and cultures – appears to be handled well by the University.

The University of Nicosia and the programme Human Biology follow an open-door policy for students. Students who have questions regarding their progress or who request special needs can approach teachers, administrative personnel and even the programme coordinator and dean.

According to the students, the wifi network is perfect. Regarding the library, every semester teachers can report their suggestions for new books or new editions to the Library. On the other hand, the course descriptions do not refer to the latest editions of study books.
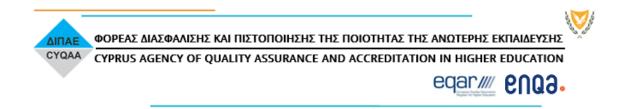
Strengths

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

1. One of the clear strengths is the novelty of facilities, buildings and material resources overall. The university campus is well designed and, compact due to be being built on purpose in the suburban area.

2. The students have nearby dorms and residences, which are also modern and well designed. Infrastructure for the support of studies, e.g., athletics facilities are also present.

3. Good Internet connection at many teaching facilities.

4. Students report being well supported for studies and in case of any special needs. The overall atmosphere appears to be informal and personal, which improves student wellbeing and satisfaction of studies. International students report welcoming atmosphere and report no 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. Although it was mentioned that the library is updating regularly the books, from the course descriptions this is not clear. Part of the explanation may be that the library puts priority in acquiring e-books and online materials. It should be mentioned, however, that the current trend worldwide is that the students less and less use printed books and standard libraries and more and more rely on electronic resources and internet.

Recommendation. If financially feasible: an update of study books with latest editions.

2. Student support fundamentally is the responsibility of the teaching staff. Although the administrative staff mentioned dedicated tutoring for students failing in their academic progression, it is not clear if these are delivered by extra or the main teaching staff. When encountering problems, such as ill health and failure to submit on time, students resort mostly to contacting their lecturers directly, which means that teaching staff have to deal with these issues outside of their formal teaching time.

Recommendation: More diverse forms of administrative support, closer to the specific School and department needs can be expected to relieve the unnecessary work-load on the teaching staff. It could be recommended that the University provide more anonymous feedback on the issues associated with xenophobia and racial discrimination.

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*
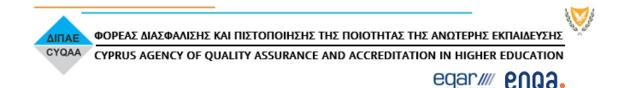 - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

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*
  - *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - *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.
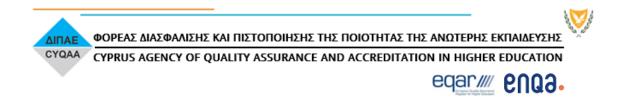
Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

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.

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	
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	
6.3	Supervision and committees	

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 programme Human Biology is composed of various courses covering the broad area of biology and biology-related disciplines. Being focussed on the human, it is a unique programme in Cyprus and gives graduates a signature that is welcomed by many institutes abroad for advanced studies or employment.
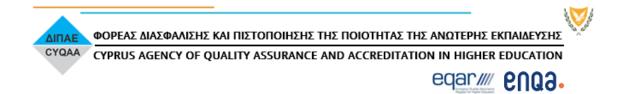
The content of the courses and the teaching methods are up-to-date and allow students to achieve the learning outcomes at the academic level. Overlap of course content is monitored among teachers of different courses and is avoided. Part of the overlap is intentional to show students how the same subject can be studied from different angles. Teaching is done in Greek as well as in English, which attracts a large number of international students (about 50%). Students have the opportunity to learn Greek or English. The bi-lingual situation is not experienced by students as a threshold for social or scientific life.

Teaching personnel has the required qualifications and has a profound devotion for education. Schooling of teaching personnel is available to warrant the implementation of current modern teaching methods.

Student admission is arranged very well and proper attention is given to students with special needs. Study progress is monitored by teachers and administrative personnel using the assessment scores but the monitoring of progress is particularly assisted by the close interaction between teachers and students due to the 1/20 ratio of teachers/students. Large study delay is avoided. Practical training of students is adequate and teachers supervise students on specific research projects. The time available for teaching personnel to perform research seems limited, but sufficient to keep informed on novel research methods and applications.

The infrastructure for executing the programme Human Biology is optimal. Rooms and labs are well equipped and all facilities are in the Central Building or on short walking distance. The library focusses on electronic reading materials and probably that is why the available on site study books are not always of the latest edition. Internet is available at all study locations.

Altogether, accreditation of the programme Human Biology is recommended. In this report a few recommendations have been posted. These have to be regarded as advice and should not prevent accreditation.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Edwin C.M. Mariman	
Andrew B. Goryachev	
Finn Skou Pedersen	
Christina Papa	.

Date: March 19th, 2021