

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: June 11th, 2021

# External Evaluation Report

## (E-learning programme of study )

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School of Humanities and Social Sciences
- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Social Sciences
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

**In Greek:**

Κοινωνική Εργασία με Εξειδίκευση στη ψυχική Υγεία

**In English:**

Social Work concentration in Mental Health [Distance Learning study]

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating with a general Master in Social Work
- **Concentrations (if any):**

**In Greek:** Concentrations

**In English:** Mental Health



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

## A. Introduction

The meeting of the evaluation committee with representatives and students of the Nicosia University was held online at the 10th June 2021.

Although the EEC found the digital arrangements well organized and sufficiently structured, we want to express our view that an onsite visit at place is strongly recommendable. We missed all the possibilities to informal follow-ups and informal discussions with the staff and students.

The visit included at distance meetings with the Rector and Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, Dean and Assoc. Dean of the School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Head of the Department of Social Sciences, Programme Coordinator of MSc Social Work, Director of e-Learning, Members of the faculty, students and graduates, members of administrative staff, Director of Academic Advising.

The evaluation committee was tasked with evaluating the Master's in Social Work with a focus on mental health.

Two basic remarks:

- The overlaps between conventional and online programmes in the Master's programme were not apparent to the EEC (Figures on the distribution of students are missing).
- The current Master's programme has a general orientation and no designated specialisation in mental health.

For these reasons, all statements in the evaluation of the EEC refer to the current curriculum and study structure without a designated specialisation in mental health or a clear differentiation between online and conventional settings.

Nevertheless, the final conclusions comment on this prospective idea in the context of international standards for Master's degree programmes in social work.

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>Thomas Gabriel</b>	Professor	Institute of Childhood, Youth and Family
<b>Tapio Salonen</b>	Professor	Malmö University
<b>Michel Vandebroeck</b>	Professor	Ghent University
<b>Santi Caballé</b>	Professor	Open University of Catalonia
<b>Katerina Nicolaou</b>	Student representative	University of Cyprus
<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>University</b>

## C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

### **Findings**

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

### **Strengths**

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

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

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

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

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

### Sub-areas

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

### 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

#### Standards

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

### 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

#### Standards

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

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

### 1.3 Public information

#### Standards

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

### 1.4 Information management

#### Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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



### Findings

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

There is a quality assurance program in place, including input from stakeholders and students. It is not clear how the internal quality program is informed by a range of data such as enrolment, student attrition, performance or graduate destinations.

I also remains unclear how the program design is informed by this quality insurance program. One example is that the program coordinator and teaching staff argues for the mental health concentration saying this is a request of the students, while this is not confirmed by the students.

The design of the program contains many optional courses and most courses are directed to practice (doing things right), but have little theoretical and fundamental social work-related reflection (doing the right things). In relation to the international definition of social work (ifsw.org, 2014), stating that “social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline), the overall impression of the EEC is that the design of the program is more aligned with the former than with the latter.

The EEC doubts the implementation of the European standards in relation to the workload of the ECTS points in the degree programme. There are too many elective courses, no final regular thesis. No quality system to verify the European quality standard was apparent to ECC. A quality system exists that monitors student and stakeholder satisfaction.

### Strengths

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

The public information is adequate.

Courses are accessible both for Greek and English language students

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

An internal quality system to monitor the European quality standards is necessary to be implemented. With regard to the internationalisation of studies and exchange of students, international standards should be taken more into account in the future.

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

Sub-area	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i></p>
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<b>1.1</b>	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
<b>1.2</b>	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Non-compliant
<b>1.3</b>	Public information	Compliant
<b>1.4</b>	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**

**2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities**

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

#### Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - *among students*
  - *between students and teaching staff*
  - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning 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 e-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

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *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 e-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.*

## 2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

### Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
  - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  - ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
  - *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
  - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?*
- *How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *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.*

It is a small cohort of students, around 25 per year, recently this has increased up to 38, probably in relation to the COVID pandemic, according to the team. The limited number of students may offer the opportunity for personalised support and learning as more student-centred learning is possible in small groups. The students confirm the close relationship with the teaching staff and the swift feedback on their assignments.

The students in the Master program originate from various undergraduate programs, yet there is not an adaptation of the program to match these different backgrounds. A student with a bachelor in statistics receives the same program as does a student with a bachelor's in social work.

Nearly all subjects utilise exams as the principal component of their assessment (usually 60%). In addition, a variety of assessments are deployed throughout the course, including practical work, projects, written assessments. There is less use of portfolios, peer evaluations and self-assessments.

Most courses have an impressive list of compulsory reading, both in English and Greek. The reading list has a good international orientation, yet contemporary references are rather limited, as many resources are from the early 2000's.

Statistics about study results were not available for the EEC.

The management strengthened the importance of internationalisation and the international cooperations and accreditations. The EEC was not provided with figures on incoming and outgoing Erasmus. We were explained that this is not applicable to the Master in Social Work and this was confirmed by the graduates. Anecdotal evidence of teacher mobility was provided.

The nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study. The university's distance learning quality assurance is evaluated by external and voluntary accreditations, such as THE, QS Stars or EFQUEL.

The university's learning management system supports online teaching, learning and administrative processes. This is a Moodle installation with all the basic online services available. The platform specifically provides synchronous (through Webex) and asynchronous tools to support the interaction needs of students with the lecturers, the other students and with the materials. The platform also provides e-assessment procedures through quizzes with automatic feedback in order to assess students' knowledge. The provision of more complex forms of e-assessment to assess competences and skills, such as critical thinking and teamwork, is also provided though was not shown during the meetings. Each course has a minimum of 9 hours of synchronous communication between teacher and students.

Collaboration among teachers and students (and among students) is conducted through the online forums of the subject and other forums that can be created ad-hoc for facing special needs. In addition, collaboration among students is promoted by collaborative activities based on project-based learning, though it was not detailed the design, procedure and technical support for these activities.

Formative assessment of the courses is based on submitted essays and reports with provision of personalized feedback during the course counting up to 40% of the final grade while summative assessment is based on a mandatory final exam counting up to 60% of the final grade. Assessment procedure during the course is completed with a number of weekly online quiz-based assignments. Optional formative (self-assessment) activities are included in the weekly study guides in order to self-evaluate student knowledge and skills of the course.

### Strengths

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

The consultation with students and alumni showed that students were highly satisfied of their studies, of the program and of the teaching staff. They appreciate the swift feedback on their assignments. They assert that they have received a practice-oriented training that prepares them for a job in the field. They particularly appreciate the generic approach of the curriculum. They explained that they found that the program of 90 ECTS was possible to combine with a full-time employment within three semesters.

The students reported that there were structural as well as informal means to give feedback to teachers and they felt this feedback was efficiently and effectively taken into account.

The EEC believes that continually evaluating the quality assurance of distance learning by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations is a good practice.



The EEC considers the university's distance learning model to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time online students who have professional duties and need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion. The provision of personalized feedback in the submitted assignments and during the teleconference sessions as well as the feedback based on rubrics and peer-assessment are considered best practices, even if they were not shown during the meetings. In addition, the EEC recognizes the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities, project based, and discussions organized in online teams. Finally, the weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week, is also considered a best practice. The EEC urges the university to keep up these strong elements of their distance learning model while reinforcing them when possible.

### 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 study lists 12 learning outcomes. However, the EEC believes that the program is ill adapted to ensure these learning outcomes are sufficiently met, compared to international standards for a MSc in Social Work. The EEC identified three areas that need improvement to match the ambition of the program.

- “Thoroughly comprehend the concepts, theories and processes of social work”. The number of theoretical courses is limited. The MSC curriculum is oriented to prepare students for executing their social work tasks, but less for theoretical depth and reflection; Contemporary social work theory and concepts are only marginally dealt with.
- “Acquire research skills”: The methodological courses are limited (1 course of 10 ECTS, with very little quantitative research). The EEC is particularly concerned with the choice to have the thesis as an option that students can take but that is not compulsory and wonders how the students who do not make that choice acquire the learning outcomes.
- “Analyse social policy”: there is no course where this learning outcome is the focus. The teaching staff ascertained that this is a course on the undergraduate level, but the EEC is concerned what this means for students with other backgrounds than a bachelor's in social work.

The EEC is also concerned with the fact that all students asserted that there was not major difficulty in acquiring the 90 ECTS in 3 semesters, along with a full-time employment. The EEC is concerned that this is yet another indication that the curriculum may not align with the European Qualifications standards. This also seems at odds with the very high number of books that are mentioned on the compulsory reading list.

The EEC was not provided with examples of how students may be involved in ongoing research, neither in the dialogue with students and alumni, nor in the dialogue with the teaching staff.

The EEC recommends that the curriculum is revised to strengthen and deepen the social work theory according to international standards and in line with the international definition of social work. In addition, the EEC recommends that the curriculum is adapted for students with other backgrounds than social work to ensure they have the opportunity to acquire the learning goals.

The EEC recommends strengthening the research in the curriculum, either by making the thesis compulsory, or by including students in other ways in ongoing research.

The EEC recommends that student and teacher mobility is enhanced, and that teacher mobility may be used for international benchmarking of the curriculum.

The EEC wants to point out that onsite final exams may not be in line with the learning style of online students, and formative continuous assessment during the course could be reinforced instead.

From the documentation provided and the information gathered from the meetings, it was not clear if gamification strategies are used to increase the student levels of motivation and engagement with the e-assessment process. In

addition, more sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents are also encouraged to support immediate and automatic feedback to students and self-evaluate their advances.

While the EEC emphasizes the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration, the online synchronous teleconferences and the teamwork among students were perceived as problematic if in the next years the program is expanded internationally and attended by many students across different time zones. It was not clear how the university would support this type of collaboration from the coordination perspective while recommending the constant adaptation of their distance learning model to support this situation by increasing the asynchronous online interaction and collaboration.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Partially compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	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.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *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:*

- *Is the teaching staff qualified to teach in the e-learning programme of study?*
- *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*

There seems to be an adequate academic qualification among the staff, but there still seems to be room for a further focus on the core discipline of social work among the teaching staff.

When it comes to safeguarding an appropriate balance between teaching and research the EEC recognize clear ambitions and efforts from the staff but in-house support from the University when it comes to research engagements could be emphasized and further developed.

The university has a distance learning unit called "e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit" (ePSU), which provides technical training and support of distance learning to the faculty members of the different University's Schools. However, the effectiveness of these training programs in the form of professional development relevant to distance learning was not shown during the meeting with the teaching staff. Faculty members can participate in training programs to increase their skills to conduct quality online teaching.

### Strengths

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

The staff seems to be dedicated to enhance a sufficient teaching and research environment with a strong interaction with the surrounding society. Several best practices of outreach with research and development project were mentioned that exemplifies the staff's societal engagement and impact.

**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 staff's research output when it comes to publications, conferences etc. is fairly modest and should be strengthened more with substantial support by the University. The current level is currently insufficient.

It would be recommendable to develop more international contributions in the master programme by guest lecturers and professors.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
<b>3.1</b>	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
<b>3.2</b>	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
<b>3.3</b>	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 EEC lacks essential statistics on acceptance, choices of courses, success/dropout rates etc. which complicates and limits our evaluations scope to determine on appropriate standards and progression for the programme. There is also an uncertainty about the proportion of students following either the conventional or the e-learning programme which blurs our abilities to recognize student achievements.

Approximately half of the student population has not a social work degree on the undergraduate level. There were no explicit considerations how the master programme handles the divergent student backgrounds to safeguard that the fundamental elements in the discipline of social work are fulfilled.

The university's Moodle platform provides a wide range of learning analytics tools for monitoring student progression and performance based on collecting information from the student with lower grades, poor participation or with undelivered activities.

The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a very good student-teacher ratio and student feedback is very positive.

### Strengths

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

A strength was noted around the very low drop-out rate (reported at 10%). In addition, student feedback was actively sought at course end and on an on-going basis throughout course delivery. However, the effectiveness of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement taken by the university was not shown.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

A fully considered strategy for ensure the standards of social work academic requirements should be implemented, especially when considering students from other disciplines.

More sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI and specifically Machine Learning are encouraged to be used to monitor and predict student performance and dropout in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures. This is strongly recommended in case of university's expansion plans through increasing the academic portfolio and the number of online students.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Non-compliant
4.2	Student progression	Partially 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

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *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 e-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.*

Our assessment of physical resources is necessary incomplete as we were reliant on information provided the university through a virtual, promotional tour, and written documentation. From this material we assume the physical resources to be, but we were unable to verify this by visiting the site.

Students have access to a number of facilities and it was ascertained to the EEC that the library gives access to major international journals as well as e-books. The impressive list of compulsory reading is not included in the e-library.

The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a weekly study guide that, even if poorly presented, it includes relevant information: objectives, learning outcomes, material to use, activities to perform, and complementary bibliographic references and recommended study time. Each course has an adequate number of hours of synchronous communication between teacher and students.

The university's ePSU unit is responsible for providing pedagogical support for designing, creating, implementing and evaluating online courses. The Unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative and summative assessment in accordance with international standards. The Unit also provides a Faculty Handbook with guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning that establishes the main characteristics a distance learning course should have. It is a good reference that guarantees the quality and homogeneity of the distance learning courses. Finally, the Unit includes certificated training programs to faculty members in the form of professional development workshops, seminars relevant to distance learning.

The university has an interesting set of services in place for student support (personal and academic counselling, student success centre, ...)

Counselling is provided for students physical or mental health needs through the Centre for Research and Counselling Services (KESY). However, none of the students and graduates the EEC met, were aware of this possibility.

### Strengths

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

The ePSU unit, even if not shown during the meeting, is considered a best practice, due to its potential structure, resources, infrastructures and services devoted to enhanced distance learning. The EEC believes that it can be a powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the provided teaching while providing a good ground to faculty members to face distance learning. Support structures are in place for students who experience hardship, including those related to learning.

The university provides support in addition to the governmental support for students experiencing economic difficulties.

Access to on-line materials and on-line learning is well supported through a number of platforms.

### 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.*

While the online courses include a good variety of learning materials (e-books and articles, videos, etc.) which are good for distance learning, the EEC suggests that some considerations should be taken into account to the recorded teleconferences and video lectures to be more usable and accessible for students: make them short, include the teacher in all the videos to provide non-verbal communication, and add subtitles for accessibility. Finally, the EEC would like to note that the compulsory material of the program (books, etc) should be made available for free to the students either from the university's library or from any other digital or physical repository. The facilities for counselling may be better announced so that all students are aware of the services available to them.

The EEC also recommends re-evaluating the list of recommended books and offer additional possibilities for students to access these (or part of these) through the library.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
<b>5.1</b>	Teaching and Learning resources	Partially compliant
<b>5.2</b>	Physical resources	Compliant
<b>5.3</b>	Human support resources	Compliant
<b>5.4</b>	Student support	Compliant

## D. Conclusions and final remarks

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

The current generalist orientation of the conventional and online Master's degree programme should be maintained and strengthened. The sense of the idea of a future specialisation in mental health cannot be assessed conclusively by the EEC. There is no data or evidence to support this. However, in view of the national practice of social work, the low number of students and the challenges in the current master's programme, an additional specialisation does not appear to make sense from the EEC's point of view. It also conflicts with existing challenges:

The high proportion of students from outside the discipline (around 50 percent without a BA in Social Work) is critical for the successful establishment and quality of the Master's programme (data on the admission procedure and the proportion of rejections were not available).

A Master's programme in social work should qualify students in particular for the conceptualisation and management of projects (and programmes) in practice, for socio-political positioning and for staff management and/or research.

Here, the consistency and workload of the current curriculum is unclear in essential points. In view of the low student numbers, the courses are presumably also open to students from other disciplines. Overall, measured against international standards, it is too arbitrary in terms of content and in relation to the competences that are to be imparted to the students.

The workload of the online offerings seems questionable, as it was studied in 1.5 years by students working full-time. This also raises questions about the assessment of the online courses.

With regard to academic standards, the volume of publications and the integration of research into teaching should be improved.

The nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study.

## E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Prof. Thomas Gabriel	
Prof. Tapio Salonen	
Prof. Michel Vandebroeck	
Prof. Santi Caballé	
Katerina Nicolaou	
Click to enter Name	

**Date:** June 11th, 2021