

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report

(E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Medical Schools
- **Department/ Sector:** Primary Care and population Health
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Family Medicine, MSc, 1,5 years, 90 ECTS, E-learning

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



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

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

Onsite visit on Nov. 14, 2022, by the evaluation committee with the exception of Prof. Teresa Guasch who participated online. The onsite visit included a visit to the Medical Center.

The detailed agenda of the onsite visit is available with Ms Emily Mouskou.

We were very well received by the faculty members, teaching and administrative staff. All were highly motivated to introduce us to their programme, and to reply to any question. They gave a convincing impression of a dynamic and highly motivated team which is keen to develop their young department as well as the medical center, in order to provide excellent teaching in this programme as well as the other programmes offered, to provide excellent patient care to the local population, as well as building research capacity and increase their research output.

Time was however too short to obtain detailed information on all aspects of this assessment.

The MSc in Family Medicine e-learning programme is predominantly aimed at international medical school graduates who are training to be family physicians or having completed their (local) training schemes.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Eva Hummers	Professor, Head, Dept. of General Practice	Göttingen University Medical Center
David Weller	Professor, Head, Dept. of General Practice	University of Edinburgh
Henk van Weert	Professor , Head Dept. of General Practice	Amsterdam University Medical Center
Teresa Guasch	Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Education	Open University of Catalonia (UOC)
Stephanos Cheilidis	Medical Student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

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.

We appreciated the efforts of the medical school in raising the profile of family medicine. The masters programme adds to an important international effort in raising awareness of, and standards in family medicine – while emphasising its academic base.

The programme appeared to embrace the institutional strategy. That is, they sought to be student-centred, they seek excellence and to meet national and international standards, they embrace excellence in patient care and there is a strong theme of professionalism which runs through the programme. In the area of equality and diversity the programme organisers acknowledge it is a private institutional providing an expensive programme with an international focus – but they do make efforts with struggling students (with financial assistance, provisions of extensions etc). Further, the students come from diverse backgrounds in a very broad range of clinical settings.

While we didn't specifically ask about student involvement in curriculum design, they do integrate feedback, have student representation on relevant committees etc. There was evidence that stakeholders such as primary care practitioners are invited to input to the curriculum.

There was good external stakeholder input. For example, they are connected with local GPs, there is a programme of visiting professors (particularly from the UK) and there is strong engagement with the RCGP. We suggested they might become part of WONCA Europe and this was well received.

In a broad way the programme addresses the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe; it certainly creates sustainable employment opportunities, and assists the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base – particularly emphasising clinical skills and the practice of family medicine. There is less material, in the core course, in areas such as formal research training, leadership, medical education, health policy, global health priorities and health service organisation – these are areas which are covered in some other Masters of Family Medicine programmes internationally, but there are opportunities to take electives in some of these areas.

There was evidence of mechanisms to promote smooth student progression. We didn't have detailed discussion about ECTS. Our understanding is that the ongoing clinical work of the students is a major contributor to ECTS – they are typically extremely busy, so we wondered about their capacity to blend ECTS achievement with the clinical work. This would be a particular issue for full-time students – all the students we spoke to were doing the course part-time. This flexibility is a real advantage to the programme.

In terms of placements, the programme appears to also have a flexible approach. We didn't ask about any specific placement programme, but note the students work in a wide diversity of clinical settings, which probably fulfils the need for 'placements'.

Based on our collective experience, it appears to us the programme meets the requirements of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area – having examined the 8 levels the Framework specifies. The students typically form strong bonds with their groups in the course, and this reinforces their learning and insights – and their work as reflective practitioners.

We went through publicly-available information and noted:

- selection criteria- these are clearly specified
- intended learning outcomes – for every module there's a good, helpful description

- qualification awarded – this is well-specified, leaving no doubt for potential candidates
- teaching, learning and assessment procedures – the information is all available on the website, with the possibility of seeking clarification/further advice if needed
- pass rates – these are provided. Note it's the kind of programme where the expectation is that the vast majority of students would complete the programme.
- learning opportunities available to the students – these are well-specified, including opportunities for supporting further student-led research
- graduate employment information: We didn't find specific information on how this course advanced the career of graduates or the kinds of new opportunities this course might offer – e.g. promotion, diversifying work activities, leadership positions, moving into family medicine academia etc. However it appears that all graduates are employed.

We were presented with a considerable amount of information about programme characteristics. The KPIs we saw were very worthy, and 95% of students are overall satisfied with the programme. We didn't see more granular indicators such as employment outcomes, future plans of students, whether the students considered it a good 'return for investment'. These more subjective data can, however, be quite difficult, and labour-intensive, to collect and analyse – some might, at best, be a future aspiration.

Some information on students' characteristics was provided regarding countries of origin and employment status and reasons for choosing this programme: 96% of students are currently employed, the vast majority over 30 h per week. Content, structure, and flexibility of the programme are highly appreciated. Further sociodemographic information such as – breakdown by gender, age, clinical roles, full-time/part-time etc. might be useful. We did get good information on country of origin. Information on student progression, success rates etc seemed, to us, quite thorough. We understand there are opportunities for intermediate degree outcomes – for example, a postgraduate diploma, for students who've not been able to complete the masters (we didn't specifically ask). Data on this would be helpful.

Strengths

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

- 1.1 We found the presentations on quality assurance very helpful and informative. The policy for quality assurance is consistent with the recognised standards – for example, it has a formal status, is publicly available (accessible via the web), ensures academic freedom, guards against intolerance, supports the involvement of external stakeholders etc. For example they have regular reviews with external colleagues and departments. We were very impressed with the culture of QA at the medical school, and every staff member appeared to embrace this culture in a very positive way. We appreciated the stepped responsibility, from the planning committee for the programme right up to the UNIC Council. The documentation provided showed very extensive evidence of the QA procedures which, to us, appeared robust and transparent.
- 1.2 While we didn't specifically ask about student involvement in curriculum design, they do integrate feedback, have student representation on relevant committees etc. There was evidence that stakeholders such as primary care practitioners are invited to input to the curriculum.

We were impressed with the processes of review of course material. The landscape of family medicine is changing, with new concepts emerging frequently in areas including primary care management of chronic disease, multi-morbidity and reflective practice. We got the impression that staff were very open to these changing concepts, and adapted their course materials accordingly. The reviews are frequent and rigorous.

- 1.3 We were impressed with the learning resources made available to the students – they seem to be excellent, by international standards. We saw evidence of students and staff working together to monitor outcomes and undertake follow-up activities.

Some further points we'd like to emphasise:

There are numerous strengths to the programme. It embraces international concepts in family medicine, drawing on guidance from key European and global institutions. This makes it attractive to a very broad range of students from around the world. The skills imparted are highly transferrable – they can be applied in a very broad range of contexts around the world

Educationally it draws on sound principles. It is highly quality assured, and is very interactive. From the description it seems it embraces modern concepts such as problem based learning. The formation of groups amongst the students, which seem potentially sustainable, seems like a good support mechanism to support learning into the future.

Their mission is both global and local – it is advancing the cause of family medicine globally and is also benefiting primary care in Cyprus

The faculty have been very adept at mobilising both external and local expertise. We were impressed by the energy and passion of the faculty. There are shared objectives, and we got a strong sense of well-functioning teamwork amongst faculty members

The yearly assessment of programmes is a great strategy to keep programmes up to date and ensure they are incorporating feedback and guidance

The very strong emphasis on quality assurance is a major positive – it encourages a culture of openness and continuous quality improvement. Perhaps a degree of caution is warranted over the huge amount of energy and resource it requires

We were impressed with the range of people involved in the programme's design and development, particularly drawing on expertise from across the faculty. We were less certain about community input, although there are good links to primary care practices. In some ways this is to be expected, as this is such a new and novel, pioneering programme.

We had some conversation about the obligations for the programme to meet the needs of the people of Cyprus. In broad terms, promoting family medicine and its academic base is a worthy aspiration, particularly as Cyprus has only recently brought primary care into its public health system. The programme has a strong international focus, so it is contributing well to international family medicine.

We found the staff to be a dedicated community, with a real passion for advancing family medicine and public health.

While it is a private university, there does appear to be a social obligation - emphasising family medicine at a global level. This draws on international best practice and guidelines
The health centre we visited was a living example of community obligation - providing a model of high quality primary care which can serve as a beacon of excellence.

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.

- 1.1 We couldn't identify any significant points for improvement. Perhaps a little more information on how the huge amount of QA information gathered shaped and modified ongoing activities would have been helpful.
- 1.2 Perhaps more involvement of current students in review processes of the programme would be beneficial.

In general:

Areas we might expect in a family Medicine programme include formal research training, leadership, medical education, health policy, global health priorities and health service organisation – these are areas which are covered in some other Masters of Family Medicine programmes internationally. There are opportunities to take electives in some of these areas, but we wondered if more might be integrated. The course is excellent in terms of core family medicine skills, and this has been career-changing for many of its graduates. The faculty may want to consider reviewing the scope of their course in the context of other masters programmes internationally

There is a degree of opacity in how the clinical areas of the course have been chosen. What was the process in developing course content? Acknowledging that no course can cover everything. The faculty may want to consider the process of choosing clinical areas and ensuring there is collective agreement, amongst faculty and stakeholders, over content.

We have raised the issue of ECTS points and how clinical work contributes to their accumulation. Is it realistic for a clinician to do the course full time? Faculty might want to consider making this process more transparent

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially 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
- 2.4 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.

- We feel the process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development. There is potential for the students to grow as individuals as a result of the course
- The process of teaching and learning is, indeed, very flexible. A great deal of consideration has been given to modes of delivery – taking account of work and personal circumstances (and time zones in the case of online delivery)
 - The e-learning methodology proposed is appropriate to achieve the aims of the program. There is a balance between videoconferences for presentations and discussion sessions to promote students' interaction.
 - The university has a pedagogical model defined that enhances an approach based on learning through interaction (there is a distance learning guideline shared with the

community). The materials and tools are adjusted to this approach through chats, forum discussions, WebEx sessions and formative and summative assessments. In general, the pedagogical approach encourages students to take an active role and the activities are designed with this purpose.

- We were presented with a range of pedagogical methods upon which faculty drew. There were considerable efforts made to address individual circumstances of students and find creative ways to facilitate the achievement of their learning outcomes.
- As previously described students are encouraged to be active participants in the learning process for the course, although this could be strengthened
- We saw examples of student-centered learning and these were encouraging. Other examples had a more teacher-centred focus, although this may reflect the content and constraints of the course material. There is plenty of scope for autonomy while appreciating teaching provides adequate guidance.
- The teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching (that we saw) are indeed modern, effective, and support the use of modern educational technologies. We wondered if the faculty might consider some other learning platforms such as AMBOSS, OSMOSIS and MED BULLETS
- We saw evidence from the presentations of efforts to ensure mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship
- From what we could see 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 appeared to be in place for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning. We base this largely on the processes we saw for student feedback.
- From what we could see the organisation and the content of practical training in the course, supports the achievement of mutually agreed learning outcomes and meets the needs of the stakeholders and students. This applies especially to activities such as role playing and discussion of complex topics Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.

2.3 Student assessment

- We wondered if the emphasis on formative testing (particularly multiple choice) was too strong. Perhaps making it non-mandatory. In general, we felt that most concepts in family medicine don't lend themselves to MCQs (given the complexity of what we do in family medicine)
- The criteria for the method of assessment are published in advance.
- We felt there was scope within some of the assessment methods for students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.
- Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.
- A formal procedure for student appeals is, indeed, in place.
- Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.

- We discussed some of the mechanisms for assessment to take into account mitigating circumstances – these seem fair and robust
- There is evidence that students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities are taken into consideration when conducting educational activities

Strengths

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

- We felt that innovative teaching methods that support learning are diverse and used widely in educational activities
- There was a defined pedagogical model and specific distance learning guidelines with strong emphasis on learning through interaction.
- The teaching staff we spoke to appeared to embrace new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective
- In our view theory and practice are well integrated in teaching and learning
- The scope and variety of methods to assess students' performance is a strong point
- The small size of the student group (10-12 students) which means that staff are able to offer intensive support for learners, both at an individual and cohort level.
- Synchronous videoconferences (2-3) in all courses to promote discussions, share feedback.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- We wondered if the emphasis on formative testing (particularly multiple choice) was too strong. Perhaps making it non-mandatory. In general, we felt that most concepts in family medicine don't lend themselves to MCQs (given the complexity of what we do in family medicine)
- The weighting of final course assessment marks (60%) seemed to favour an end of year exam and the committee encourages considering more of a focus on ongoing continuous assessment. We also suggest providing feedback at the end of the final exam in order to become more formative, due to the weighting of the exam.
- We didn't have significant concerns about fairness and consistency, however continuous attention will be needed concerning subjectivity of ratings of non-MCQ assessments, and to equality in their judgement
- Practical training in communication and consultation skills and performing audits is very well done. However it must be noted that while clinical topics represent a large part of the theoretical teaching, the practical clinical work of the student is not assessed in this e-learning programme.

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	Partially compliant
2.3	Student assessment	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 and 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 from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

We found a highly skilled teaching faculty with huge energy, passion and commitment to delivering this course in family medicine. Like any new institution, the research is so far lagging behind the development of the teaching programmes. We feel this is likely to improve, given the determination and commitment of the faculty.

- From the staff we spoke to there seemed to be reasonable arrangements in place for personal and professional development of staff. We noted there was a paucity of GPs on the faculty – this is unfortunate given the content of the coursework
- We heard a bit about recruitment processes. These seemed robust, and senior posts are typically advertised internationally in order to attract the highest calibre applicants. We didn't ask detailed questions about the appointment process but it appears to follow principles of equality and diversity
- Qualifications are appropriate for the delivery of the various aspects of the programme. There was a large number of PG Cert's in Medical Education. Several senior staff have doctoral qualifications (more on the Public Health side, note KH has a MD degree).
- There appear to be ample opportunities for teaching staff to engage in professional and teaching-skills training and development – for example attending family medicine and medical education conferences
- We didn't ask in detail about promotion processes at the university – partly because the programme is all quite new
- We are left with the strong impression that innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is strongly encouraged.
- The prevailing culture within the medical school is one of recognition of the importance of teaching. The department is, nevertheless, ambitious in gaining prominence in research.
- They have regular visiting teaching staff and they participate in teaching the programme.
- From the staff we spoke to there seemed to be reasonable arrangements in place for personal and professional development of staff. We noted there was a paucity of GPs on the faculty – this is unfortunate given the content of the coursework
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- Qualifications are appropriate for the delivery of the various aspects of the programme. There was a large number of PG Cert's in Medical Education. Several senior staff have doctoral qualifications (more on the Public Health side, note KH has a MD degree).
- There appear to be ample opportunities for teaching staff to engage in professional and teaching-skills training and development – for example attending family medicine and medical education conferences. The University has a faculty development program, which included training the staff on how to provide feedback, design assessment, resources support, how to promote interaction in the online program, etc.
- We didn't ask in detail about promotion processes at the university – partly because the programme is all quite new
- The prevailing culture within the medical school is one of recognition of the importance of teaching. The department is, nevertheless, ambitious in gaining prominence in research.
- They have regular visiting teaching staff and they participate in teaching the programme.
- The teaching staff publications are frequently within the disciplines of public health and family medicine, although there are also examples of biomedical/lab-based research (reflecting the broad base of the faculty)

- Student evaluation is conducted on the teaching staff: From what we heard this input is encouraged, and forms an important and valued element of the staff evaluation

Strengths

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

As detailed above, the commitment of the faculty shines through. The multidisciplinary nature of the faculty is important, and adds considerably to the student experience. The GPs on the programme are well-qualified, although more of them are needed. This is an ambitious programme with global aims. The establishment of the medical centre is a game-changer – a real innovation with the potential to underpin research and teaching. The data it produces will, in the future, be ripe for education, research QA and audit-based projects in the future if the improvement and refinement of the data/information systems is treated as a high priority, which it should remain in the future.

We are left with the strong impression that innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is strongly encouraged.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- We noted there was a paucity of GPs on the faculty – this is quite unfortunate given the content of the coursework
- Synergies of teaching and research: We felt there were tangible examples of this – albeit the research output is still modest (despite the rising number of publications). There are examples of research (e.g. early diagnosis, survivorship etc.) which would lend itself well to teaching.
- Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.
- The faculty and teachers face all the challenges of a new programme. Numbers are still quite low, and primary care isn't as well-developed in Cyprus as it is in other parts of the world. Some challenges arise from lack of primary care infrastructure. For example, in the medical centre, collected data doesn't readily enable detailed analysis (for example for clinical audit). This is an unfortunate constraint on research potential for students. Further, there aren't resources such as primary care research networks, or database like CPRD in the UK to facilitate primary care research. This is an evolving situation – things will improve. As mentioned, having more GPs on the programme would be a great help.



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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Partially 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.

We've found no problems in student admission, progression, recognition and certification procedures. Indeed the procedures in place appear robust and transparent. There are some issues around compliance with EU requirements for vocational training, although this is out with the remit and responsibility of the course.

Student admission, processes and criteria

- There are very clear, pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission.
- We've read through considerable university guidance on access policies, admission processes and criteria – to us they appear to be implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.
- We appreciate the amount of time and effort that goes into selection processes – some very impressive processes

Student progression

- Again there are very clear, pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression
- We discussed some of the processes and tools used to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression (we found the use of quizzes and assignments quite innovative). For example, the faculty are able to pick up at a fairly early stage if a student is struggling/falling behind. The formative assessment is a major vehicle for this (although, as previously indicated this assessment may possibly be over-done in places, with the potential to overly burden students, and staff).
- We were impressed by the exams office procedures

- We discussed, as an example, the procedures in place to recognise and act upon plagiarism in student assignments – these processes are consistent with international best practice.

Student recognition

- We appreciate the existence of a careers and alumni office – they develop career pathways and offer very individualised guidance. They also do Q&A sessions and seem to be very available – all quite impressive.
- We didn't enquire about recognition of prior qualifications for students entering the course, although assumed that appropriate procedures are in place.

Student certification

- We identified clear, pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification.
- There are processes in place to ensure that 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.

We would also add::

- The admission requirements for the study programme are clearly described and appropriate
- In the certification process there is a provision made for a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards
- Importantly, the 1st 2 semesters of the programme are accredited by the RCGP – hence candidates are exempt from the early theoretical components of the RCGP (Int). It also helps establish their eligibility to sit the RCGP Int exam.

Strengths

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

As described above, there are numerous strengths. The programme opens a lot of doors for students, and includes the potential for gaining the RCGP Int qualification. This adds to their employability, not just in the UK, but in a range contexts and countries. It strengthens candidates' credentials as independent reflective practitioners, and diversifies career opportunities.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

We wondered about the potential of the programme as a route into academic family medicine. Should prospective applicants be advised this is a good preparation for a PhD programme? Or should they be advised to do the MPH? Perhaps being a little more explicit guidance about these issues would be helpful? Noting these is no doubt that the course will help some candidates into leadership positions.

Should candidates be counselled that if they have demanding clinical positions they would find it difficult to do the course full time?

Click or tap here to enter text.

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	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

- *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.

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

- From the presentations we saw we confirm there are adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment). The library services are particularly impressive with excellent access to the international literature.
- The resources seemed flexible, and able to accommodate changing circumstances.
- The emphasis on digital resources is appropriate for both online and face-to-face programmes. The resources are very well curated.
- The resources take into account student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching

5.2 Physical resources

- From what we saw the IT infrastructure seems adequate to support the study programme – and there are sufficient resources.

5.3 Human support resources

- In terms of human support resources, the only shortage we could see was for GPs – and we note there are 2 advertised vacancies at present.
- The human resources seem very flexible and adaptive – and fit for purpose

5.4 Student support

- The programme does, indeed, cover the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.
- Having online provision is a major factor in this – but also, the programme is tailored to each individual student. This individualised approach is very student-centred and facilitative.
- Students appear to be well informed about the services available to them

Strengths

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

As described above, the support and services for students seem excellent. Having an online option is a great positive in terms of making the programme student-friendly and accommodating

The programme draws on best practice internationally with its support for students.

Click or tap here to enter text.

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.

No significant areas for improvement were identified

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

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

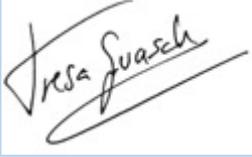
It has been a pleasure and an honour for us to evaluate this programme. As family medicine academics it is very encouraging for us to see this relatively new venture at UNIC, with its focus on strengthening family medicine both locally and internationally. In its first few years the programme has demonstrated its ability to recruit from a very broad base around the world. It is also showing the early signs of development as a research-led course, and there are some solid research outputs from faculty – ideally in the future this will be complemented by a portfolio of student-led publications. It is a well-integrated educational program with a good balance between medical content and organisational & societal components.

The faculty for this programme are committed and passionate about the course. Their enthusiasm and dedication are obvious, and this helps to make us confident the programme will be a long-term success. Throughout the report we've made some minor suggestions and comments – we emphasise, however, that we have formed a very positive impression of the programme. We consider it will make a significant contribution to international efforts to improve the quality of family medicine, and its academic base. The programme is producing, we believe, a group of highly motivated graduates with the potential to become leaders in their field. We urge the programme organisers to stay in touch with their alumni – they will enrich your activity, and you may even be able to recruit one or two of them to teach on the course.

We wish the programme organisers, and the wider faculty at UNICS well, and look forward to hearing about future achievements as the programme grows in size and stature.



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Eva Hummers	Eva Hummers
David Weller	David Weller
Henk van Weert	Henk van Weert
Teresa Guasch	
Stephanos Cheilidis	Stephanos Cheilidis
Click to enter Name	

Date: Nov. 16, 2022