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Date: 18/06/2026

External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: Open University of Cyprus**
- **Town: Nicosia**
- **School/Faculty (if applicable): School of Economic Sciences and Management**
- **Department/ Sector: Department/Sector**
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
In Greek:
Επιστήμες της Αγωγής με κατευθύνσεις: 1. Εκπαιδευτική Ηγεσία και Πολιτική 2. Εκπαίδευση για την Κοινωνική Δικαιοσύνη 3. Ειδική και Συμπεριληπτική Εκπαίδευση (με ή χωρίς πρακτική άσκηση) 4. Τεχνολογίες Μάθησης και Επικοινωνίας [1,5-2 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90-110 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό (MA), E-Learning]
In English:
Educational Sciences with concentrations: a) Educational Leadership and Policy b) Social Justice Education c) Special and Inclusive Education (with or without practical training) and d) Technologies of Learning and Communication, [1,5-2 academic years, 90-110 ECTS, Master of Arts (MA), E-Learning]
- **Language(s) of instruction: Greek**

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].

- Programme’s status: Currently Operating
- Concentrations (if any):

In Greek: α) Εκπαιδευτική Ηγεσία και Πολιτική, (β) Εκπαίδευση για την Κοινωνική Δικαιοσύνη, (γ) Ειδική και Συμπεριληπτική Εκπαίδευση (με ή χωρίς πρακτική άσκηση) και (δ) Τεχνολογίες Μάθησης και Επικοινωνίας.

In English: (a) Educational Leadership and Policy, (b) Social Justice Education, (c) Special and Inclusive Education (with or without practical training) and (d) Technologies of Learning and Communication.

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

In this section we report on the site visit to the Open University of Cyprus on the 17th June, 2026 to review two programmes; the MA in Education Sciences (distance) with four thematic areas. The MA was last reviewed in 2021.

The team were welcomed at the OUC to begin their work at 9.00. The EEC would like to thank the OUC for the excellent quality of the preparatory materials as well as for the organizing of our site visit. We thank in particular Ms Elena Ionnidou, who was available throughout the day to ensure the meetings ran smoothly.

We began our meetings with a welcome by the Vice Rector, who is also Chairperson of the International Quality Assurance Committee, Faculty of Economics and Management. This was followed by presentations by the Dean and Director of the MA programmes in Education Sciences, and Course Coordinator.

We appreciated very much the opportunity to speak with academic staff – those teaching staff who are full-time permanent and adjuncts, administrators working on various aspects of the university infrastructures that support programme operations and the student experience, students past and present, stakeholders and

We note that Professor Mirjam Hauck, our expert on E-Learning on the panel, was unable to attend in person due to a family crisis. She nevertheless made herself available throughout the day via a series of dedicated zoom links for the different sessions; the Chair ensured that she has a good opportunity to ask questions around the areas of her expertise.

Overall, we would like to thank the OUC for their willingness to answer any of our queries, provide additional information or clarifications, and to make this a very productive visit.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Susan Robertson	Chair	University of Manchester
Andrea Young	Committee Member	University of Strasbourg
Mirjam Hauck	Committee Member	Open University (UK)
Josefina Sala	Committee Member	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Nicoletta Michael	Committee Member (student)	Cyprus University of Technology

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.

The Open University of Cyprus is a public university founded in 2002, which admitted its first students in 2006 and 2007. It is the only university in Cyprus specialised in open and distance learning. The institution is broadly organised through 3 Schools, with no formal departments, and its overall orientation is toward high-quality, interdisciplinary, career-oriented, accredited undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

It is a member of a wide range of university networks, the most notable being the Open EU – a pan-European open university operating within the European Higher Education Area, aimed at providing flexible learning pathways for diverse learners, including underrepresented and non-traditional students. A key element of its approach is the use of digital transformations, particularly the delivery of distance-learning courses, to meet its goals.

The Open University of Cyprus is linked to a range of partners, including universities, university associations, and non-academic organisations. It has a clear stated vision; to be a modern, pioneering, people-centred, and outstanding university that achieves objectives set at the national level while also contributing to wider social and cultural endeavours within Cyprus. It also has a clear mission statement centred on access, the advancement of scientific knowledge, cultural development, and collaboration with broader society.

It refers to a strategic vision for 2025–2028 focuses on driving digital excellence in higher education through lifelong learning, innovative research, digital transformation, internal entrepreneurship, and partnerships to generate societal impact. It also includes a strong emphasis on internationalisation, outreach, and reputation-building.

In terms of internationalisation, the university pursues strategies with renowned universities worldwide, including links to research centres and organisations as well as the recent EUOU linking all Open Universities in Europe together. The OUC is engaged in joint degrees and collaborates internationally on various programmes, participates in Erasmus, and works with a range of European and international organisations. Accreditation is awarded by the Cyprus Accreditation Agency, and the university also holds recognition in several non-EU countries, including Russia.

Currently student enrolment stands at 2,890, with 42% at the undergraduate level and 54% at the master's level.

The university offers five undergraduate programmes, 23 postgraduate programmes, and three PhD programmes. The overall institutional budget is nearly €19 million, with state funding contributing just over 63%. To date, the university has produced over 10,000 graduates across undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Unsurprisingly, given its orientation toward master's programmes, the student body is largely composed of individuals aged 26–45, with a smaller proportion in the 19–25 age group. Gender representation is 59% female and 39% male.

The university secures funding from various projects, including Horizon, Erasmus, and COST, among others.

It enjoys a high level of recognition: several of its faculty members are among the top 2% of scientists in their fields, and there is a substantial number of adjunct faculty. The university hosts a UNESCO Chair, a Jean Monnet Chair, a Commonwealth of Learning Chair, and has received numerous other awards and acknowledgements.

There is a University Internal Quality Assurance Committee in which the Vice Rector, faculty members, and students participate. Students have the opportunity to give feedback on programme, course and tutor. This feedback is taken into account, e.g., in programme development and in recruitment.

An Advisory Committee has been established in the Faculty of Economics and Management – with industry representatives - to enable a closer link with industry. They meet once a year in a formal sense, however it was clear that this body provides a means for regular conversations that adds significantly to the stakeholder engagement with the Faculty.

The Academic Director oversees the study programme design, development and management.

The Quality Assurance seems in place to internally monitor the quality on a regular basis, on aspects such as: programme standards, performance of teaching and administration staff and student learning experiences. There is an Internal Quality Assurance Committee that operates at two levels; University, and Faculty. Tutor performance is evaluated by students, the programme director and the module coordinator. The EEC discussed what happens with poor performance and were confident that the processes work to ensure that these issues can be dealt with.

The purposes of the MA Education Sciences 90 ECTS (in line with the EQF) are clearly defined with 4 specializations: leadership and policies, social justice, inclusion and special needs, and learning technologies in education. It is also evident it meets an important set of needs, and especially the thematic around inclusion and special needs (can be an optional 120 ECTS with a practicum offers via the University of Crete)

The main intended job contexts are teacher, educational developer, and policy maker where most students are already working.

The MA Education Sciences (4 thematic tracks) overall programme objectives appear to be in line with the institutional strategy of the University and Faculty level. Whilst the overall goals of the university and faculty highlight its ambition to be a well-known research enterprise, we note (as did the previous review) that most students undertake the masters without the dissertation component. The EEC can see some structural issues as to why students might be discouraged from this route as the supervisory arrangements given the very small number of permanent staff would be impossible. It was indicated that only 1 or 2 students a year choose this route. Around 90% of the students choose not to. A tenure track system and more permanent positions, as well as resources and time allotted to research are warmly recommended, if the strong emphasis on research is seriously intended. A new position has been advertised and filled (Professor of Psychology) who will join in September 2026.

The programme is subject to a formal institutional approval which involves the Faculty and Senate. Considering the documents, teaching staff and student interviews, the programme seems to be appropriate, leading students to progress in their studies. The dropout rate of the students is around 10% which is reasonable in the circumstances. The student's assignments are consistent with the courses' acceptable especially given that many are working in full-time jobs.

The qualification system is clear and well delimited, and in accordance with regulations.

Strengths

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

Clear quality assurance processes and structures that relate to the programme, academic performance and student progress.

The Advisory Committee providing space for a more active engagement with stakeholders.

The MA Education Sciences (Inclusion and Special Education) with a 30-credit practicum (120 ECTS in total) with the U of Crete.

The appointment of a new tenure track professor to begin in September 2026.

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.

None

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	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.*
- *For distance learning programs, the number of students in both undergraduate and Master's level postgraduate programs does not exceed **30** students per class.*

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.

The programme is delivered through the Open University of Cyprus distance-learning model, combining synchronous and asynchronous learning activities through the eClass platform and teleconferencing tools. The methodology is designed to support student-centred learning and promotes interaction between students, tutors and learning materials through forums, discussion activities, group meetings, collaborative tasks and regular communication with teaching staff. Students are organised into sections of no more than 30 participants and each section is assigned a tutor who is responsible for teaching, monitoring progress and providing academic support under the supervision of the Thematic Unit Coordinator and the Programme Director.

The EEC found evidence of a conscious effort to balance the flexibility required by adult learners with opportunities for interaction and engagement. Most students are working professionals, often with family responsibilities, and

highly value the possibility of studying independently while maintaining regular contact with tutors and peers. During the site visit, students, tutors and programme management consistently emphasised that the programme seeks to create an active learning community despite the geographical dispersion of participants. A variety of regular activities are used to support this objective, including online discussions, collaborative tasks, peer interaction, analysis of case studies, reflective activities and group-based learning exercises.

Students reported that the programme content is professionally relevant and that the knowledge and skills acquired can be readily transferred to their workplace contexts. Many students highlighted that the programme not only contributes to their academic development but also helps them reflect critically on their professional practice and implement changes in their educational settings. Stakeholders also underlined the importance of programmes of this nature in preparing educational professionals capable of connecting academic knowledge with the realities of schools and educational organisations.

Particular attention is given to students enrolled in the Special and Inclusive Education specialisation. The programme offers an optional practicum pathway that enables students, especially those from Greece, to fulfil the requirements established by the Greek educational authorities for professional recognition and career advancement. Students may undertake this practicum within their own professional environment, facilitating the integration of theoretical learning and professional practice.

Student support is based on close tutor-student interaction. When students fail to participate or submit assignments, tutors actively contact them by email or telephone in order to identify potential difficulties and encourage re-engagement. Where necessary, the Programme Director intervenes directly, communicating personally with students and exploring possible solutions, including flexible arrangements where justified. Students expressed a high level of appreciation for this personalised approach and reported that they felt supported throughout their studies.

The EEC noted, however, that monitoring students who gradually disengage from learning activities relies substantially on the active involvement of tutors. Although tutors maintain close contact with their students, the current platform does not provide a fully integrated mechanism that facilitates the systematic early identification of students at risk of disengagement.

The programme demonstrates a constructive approach to the use of artificial intelligence. During the visit, staff emphasised that the focus is placed on the ethical, transparent and critical use of AI tools rather than solely on preventing misuse. Students are expected to declare how AI has been used in their work and to reflect on its contribution to their learning process.

Overall, the EEC found that the programme provides a supportive and student-centred learning environment that is well aligned with the needs of adult learners studying at a distance, while maintaining appropriate opportunities for interaction, feedback, collaborative learning and academic support.

Strengths

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

- The programme successfully fulfils the mission of the Open University of Cyprus to widen access to higher education by offering a flexible distance-learning model that accommodates the needs of working adults and students with family responsibilities. The comparatively affordable tuition fees further contribute to the accessibility of the programme.

- The programme has developed a supportive and student-centred learning environment in which tutors and programme management maintain close communication with students. The personalised follow-up provided to students experiencing difficulties is particularly valued by the student body.
- The programme offers multiple opportunities for interaction and collaborative learning through synchronous and asynchronous activities, helping to create a learning community despite the geographical dispersion of students.
- Students reported high levels of satisfaction with the relevance of the curriculum and highlighted the immediate applicability of the knowledge and skills acquired to their professional practice.
- The optional practicum pathway within the Special and Inclusive Education specialisation responds effectively to the requirements established by the Greek educational authorities, increasing the professional relevance and attractiveness of the programme for students from Greece.
- The programme responds to a recognised societal and professional need by providing advanced educational training to a large population of practising educators, thereby contributing to the development of more informed and reflective educational professionals.

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 programme provides close and personalised support through tutors and programme management, the EEC noted that the identification of students who gradually disengage from learning activities relies largely on the active monitoring carried out by individual tutors. The University is encouraged to explore the implementation of additional learning analytics and monitoring tools within the distance-learning platform that would facilitate the early identification of students at risk of disengagement and support timely interventions.
- The programme may also consider further opportunities for strengthening peer-to-peer interaction and the sense of belonging to an academic community among geographically dispersed students, while maintaining the flexibility that constitutes one of its principal strengths.
- The possibility to carry out a short professional placement (particularly for those students who are not currently employed in their professional field of interest) in order to witness first-hand the contextualised implementation of practices grounded in theoretical understanding would be appreciated by certain students. This could be introduced as an optional element in the course and the alumni association could be a valuable asset in terms of identifying suitable placement opportunities.

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

Sub-area	Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
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2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	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 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 from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The programme is supported by a relatively small core of permanent academic staff consisting of three full-time faculty members (Professor Michalinos Zembylas, Dr Antonios Kafa and Dr Panayiota Kendeou), who provide academic leadership, programme coordination and oversight of the curriculum. The programme is further supported by thirteen Adjunct Academic Staff (AAS) members who are recruited through a competitive and transparent institutional process. Every three years, the University establishes a pool of eligible adjunct faculty members through an open call and evaluation procedure. Candidates are ranked according to predefined criteria, and appointments are made progressively according to programme needs and student enrolment.

The academic qualifications of the teaching staff are appropriate for the level and objectives of the programme. Most adjunct faculty members hold doctoral degrees and maintain active research profiles, often combining their teaching responsibilities at the Open University of Cyprus with academic appointments at other universities or research institutions in Cyprus and abroad. The permanent academic staff are established scholars with strong international research records, participation in international collaborations and research fellowships, and recognised expertise in the fields covered by the programme.

The University has developed structured mechanisms to support teaching staff in the specific requirements of online and distance education. New teaching staff receive training and induction, while a dedicated 12-week training programme covers topics such as adult learning theories, distance learning methodologies, active student engagement, creation of effective video lectures, and assessment and feedback in online environments.

The quality assurance system includes the systematic evaluation of teaching staff through student feedback collected each semester, complemented by an annual performance review carried out by the Programme Coordinator. Evaluation results are reviewed by both the Programme Coordinator and, where applicable, the Module Coordinator. When concerns are identified, staff members receive guidance, mentoring and support aimed at improving their teaching performance. Continued low performance may affect future appointments, while positive evaluations increase the likelihood of contract renewal. The University further promotes teaching excellence through an annual teaching award granted at faculty level.

The University places considerable emphasis on maintaining the research activity of its permanent academic staff. Full-time faculty members receive institutional support for research, including an annual research allowance of €5,000 and measures intended to avoid excessive teaching workloads. In practice, permanent staff are generally responsible for one module per semester, with teaching loads further adjusted when significant administrative responsibilities are undertaken. This arrangement appears to facilitate the continuation of active research programmes while ensuring effective academic leadership of the degree.

The expertise, research interests and publication records of the teaching staff are closely aligned with the content of the programme's courses. Current research is incorporated into teaching and learning activities, and students are regularly exposed to recent scholarly developments in the field. Overall, the allocation of teaching responsibilities and research time appears appropriate and supports the integration of teaching and research within the programme.

At the same time, the programme relies heavily on adjunct academic staff, reflecting the broader institutional model of the Open University of Cyprus. While this model appears to function effectively and is supported by robust quality assurance mechanisms, the sustainability of the programme remains closely linked to a relatively small number of permanent academic staff responsible for academic leadership and coordination. The anticipated appointment of an additional permanent faculty member is therefore viewed positively as a measure that may further strengthen the long-term resilience and sustainability of the programme.

Strengths

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

Although the number of permanent academic staff is relatively small, the programme benefits from highly qualified faculty members with strong research profiles and expertise closely aligned with the programme's areas of specialisation. The adjunct faculty members also appear to be strongly engaged in the programme and possess academic and professional experience that is highly relevant to the subjects they teach, enabling them to enrich the learning experience through the integration of both research and professional practice.

Compared with the concerns expressed in the previous accreditation cycle regarding the limited number of permanent staff, the programme has strengthened its mechanisms for recruitment, monitoring and support of adjunct faculty, which contribute to maintaining academic quality.

The institutional model, which relies on a broad pool of pre-selected adjunct faculty members, provides sufficient flexibility to respond to teaching needs while ensuring that appropriately qualified staff are available when required. Furthermore, the systematic semester-based evaluation of teaching staff by students, combined with the programme's quality assurance procedures, contributes to maintaining and enhancing the overall quality of teaching and learning within the programme.

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.

Given the programme's reliance on a relatively small number of permanent academic staff, the EEC encourages the University to continue strengthening its permanent faculty base whenever institutional and regulatory conditions permit. Increasing the number of permanent staff would further enhance the programme's sustainability, reduce vulnerability to unexpected staff changes, and reinforce its academic leadership and continuity.

While the programme's reliance on adjunct academic staff reflects the institutional model of the Open University of Cyprus and is supported by established recruitment, training and quality assurance procedures, the EEC considers it important that the University continues to strengthen its permanent academic staff base in order to further support long-term academic leadership, continuity and programme sustainability.

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	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

Sub-areas

- 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria
- 4.2 Student progression
- 4.3 Student recognition
- 4.4 Student certification

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
 - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
 - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*

- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings

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

The EEC found that student admission, progression, recognition and certification procedures are regulated through the institutional regulations of the Open University of Cyprus and are publicly available to prospective and enrolled students. Admission procedures are conducted electronically and the formal admission qualifications, as well as any criteria for ranking applications, are determined by each Programme of Study and approved by the Senate.

Admission requirements for the MA in Educational Sciences include a Bachelor's degree from a recognised higher education institution. Applicants who are expected to obtain their degree before registration are also eligible to apply. In addition, candidates are expected to possess a good command of English, as a significant part of the educational material is available in English, and adequate information technology skills.

The student population is composed predominantly of female students, with more of enrolled students coming from Greece than Cyprus. The average age of students is 41.1 years, reflecting the profile of mature learners who typically combine their studies with full-time employment and family responsibilities. The EEC was informed that student enrolments have increased in recent years, a trend that the programme management partly attributes to the affordability of its tuition fees compared to other available postgraduate programmes in the region.

During the site visit, the EEC was informed that the programme currently has sufficient capacity to accommodate most applicants who meet the admission requirements. Consequently, admission is generally not based on competitive selection among qualified candidates.

Student progression is governed by the University's Internal Regulations for Studies, which define the requirements for enrolment, successful completion of modules and graduation. The maximum duration of studies for Master's programmes is six (6) academic years or twelve (12) semesters. The programme reports a dropout rate of approximately 10.9%, which appears consistent with the profile of a distance-learning programme serving working adult students.

The EEC noted that monitoring student engagement and progression relies to a considerable extent on the active involvement of individual tutors. The current learning platform does not provide an integrated mechanism that readily identifies students who gradually disengage from learning activities or participation. Consequently, tutors are

expected to closely monitor student participation and identify potential difficulties at an early stage. Where necessary, the Programme Director may intervene directly, communicate with students, and explore possible solutions aimed at supporting their continuation in the programme.

The recognition of prior studies and transfer of credits is regulated through formal institutional procedures. Successfully completed courses from other recognised higher education institutions may be recognised, provided that they are equivalent in level, workload and content to the corresponding modules of the programme. Credits obtained at other institutions may be recognised for up to 25% of the total ECTS requirements of the programme, while credits obtained at the Open University of Cyprus or at institutions with which the University has signed formal cooperation agreements may be recognised for up to 50% of the programme's ECTS requirements.

Student certification procedures are formally regulated. Upon successful completion of all academic requirements, students are awarded the corresponding qualification following the established institutional procedures. Graduates receive the relevant academic documentation, including a Transcript of Records, and may obtain a Diploma Supplement in English providing additional information on the nature, level and content of the studies completed.

Strengths

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

The programme is well aligned with the mission of the Open University of Cyprus to widen participation in higher education and provide learning opportunities for adult learners who might otherwise face difficulties in accessing postgraduate studies. The combination of a flexible distance-learning model and comparatively affordable tuition fees enables students to combine studies with professional and personal responsibilities, thereby facilitating access to higher education for individuals with limited time availability or financial resources.

The programme successfully attracts a diverse population of mature students and responds effectively to their professional development needs. A notable strength is the availability of a practicum module that allows Greek students to fulfil specific requirements established by the Greek educational authorities. This enhances the professional relevance and recognition of the qualification and increases the attractiveness of the programme for prospective students from Greece.

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 recommends exploring the implementation of additional learning analytics and monitoring tools within the distance-learning platform that would facilitate the early identification of students at risk of disengagement. Such mechanisms could help detect reduced participation, inactivity, or missed learning activities in a more systematic manner and support timely interventions by tutors and programme management. This would further strengthen the student support system and contribute to maintaining student engagement and progression throughout the programme.

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.

The programme is supported by a well-developed digital learning environment centred on the eClass platform, which integrates synchronous and asynchronous teaching, learning resources, communication tools, assessment functions and access to library services. Students have access to a wide range of educational materials, including textbooks, scientific articles, multimedia resources, recorded lectures, self-assessment activities and collaborative learning tools. Weekly interactive activities are embedded within the courses and contribute to maintaining student engagement throughout the learning process. The platform also facilitates communication between students and teaching staff and supports the submission and assessment of assignments.

The University has established dedicated structures to support the design, development and quality assurance of distance learning. The Laboratory of Educational Material and Methodology (LEMM), together with the Pedagogical and Technology Team, supports academic staff in the development of educational materials, interactive learning activities and innovative teaching approaches. These structures contribute to the continuous enhancement of the distance-learning model through pedagogical guidance, instructional design support, staff training and the development of digital educational resources. The EEC found evidence that the University possesses significant internal expertise in distance education and educational technology, which contributes to the quality and sustainability of the programme.

The technological infrastructure supporting the programme appears robust and fit for purpose. The University maintains a mature distance-learning ecosystem that has been developed and refined over many years and is supported by specialised technical staff. Dedicated e-learning and multimedia facilities support the production of educational content and the delivery of online learning activities. Students and staff reported that the platform operates reliably and provides effective access to learning materials, communication tools and assessment processes.

The library constitutes an important learning resource for students and staff. In addition to its physical facilities, it offers extensive electronic collections, including books, journals, databases, conference proceedings and institutional repositories, all of which are accessible remotely. The EEC noted that the breadth of available electronic resources is particularly valuable for a programme serving a geographically dispersed student population and relying extensively on access to international scientific literature.

Human support resources are organised through a clearly defined structure involving the Programme Director, Thematic Unit Coordinators, tutors and administrative staff. Students benefit from regular academic support and guidance throughout their studies, while tutors maintain close communication with learners and provide ongoing feedback and assistance. Teaching staff receive specialised preparation for distance education through institutional training programmes and continuous professional development opportunities focusing on online teaching, student engagement and assessment in virtual environments. Technical support is also available to both students and staff through dedicated support services.

Student support extends beyond academic matters and addresses the needs of a diverse student population, including mature students, employed learners, international students and students with disabilities. The University has established formal procedures and dedicated services to support students with disabilities and provide reasonable accommodations where required. In addition, students have access to counselling and psychological support services, career guidance, mobility opportunities, financial assistance schemes and administrative support throughout their studies.

The EEC found that the learning resources and support services available to students are comprehensive and well aligned with the profile of the programme and its student population. The combination of specialised distance-learning infrastructure, extensive library resources, structured academic support and broad student welfare services provides an appropriate framework for supporting student learning, engagement and success in a distance-learning environment.

Strengths

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

- The programme benefits from a mature and well-established distance-learning ecosystem, supported by the eClass platform and by dedicated institutional structures for the design, development and quality assurance of online learning.
- The University has invested in specialised expertise through the Laboratory of Educational Material and Methodology (LEMM) and the Pedagogical and Technology Team, providing systematic support for educational innovation, instructional design and staff development in distance education.
- Students have access to extensive learning resources, including a large collection of electronic books, journals and databases, all available remotely and particularly well suited to the needs of geographically dispersed learners.
- The programme is supported by a clearly structured academic and administrative support system involving the Programme Director, Thematic Unit Coordinators, tutors and specialised support services, ensuring continuous guidance and assistance throughout students' studies.
- Student support services are comprehensive and include academic advising, disability support, psychological counselling, career guidance, mobility opportunities and financial assistance schemes. These services are well aligned with the profile of the programme's predominantly adult and working student population.
- The University demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to accessibility and inclusion through well-established procedures for supporting students with disabilities and providing reasonable accommodations tailored to individual needs.

- The technological infrastructure and support services provide a reliable environment for distance learning, enabling students to access learning resources, communicate with staff and complete assessment activities effectively regardless of their geographical location.

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 programme benefits from extensive learning resources and a well-developed support infrastructure, the EEC encourages the University to further strengthen the use of learning analytics and monitoring tools within the eClass platform in order to facilitate the early identification of students at risk of disengagement and support timely interventions.
- The University is encouraged to systematically collect and analyse student feedback specifically related to support services, including academic support, counselling, disability services and administrative support, in order to further support evidence-based enhancement of these services.
- Given the profile of the student population, participation in traditional physical mobility schemes may be limited. Nevertheless, the University could explore additional opportunities for international engagement, including short-term virtual exchanges, joint online activities, guest lectures and other forms of international collaboration that are compatible with the needs of adult distance-learning students.

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.

In drawing our report to a close, the EEC would like to congratulate all those involved across the institution—particularly the module coordinators and the programme director—for their work on the MA in Education Sciences, with its four areas of specialism.

We would like to note the overall receptiveness to our questions, as well as the rigour and commitment demonstrated throughout.

We feel that across the institution—whether in terms of infrastructure or teaching—there is significant evidence of quality in delivery and in the ways students feel engaged not only by their teachers, but also by those who help organise the programme.

Among the other elements we observed, largely relating to best practice, is the inclusion of an Advisory Committee that meets annually. In effect, however, it became clear that its members maintain ongoing conversations throughout the year. The faculty is to be congratulated for this.

We feel that across all the categories of interest to us—whether research, teaching, overall infrastructure, library support, digital platforms, and so on—this programme is in exceptionally good hands.

Over the course of the next cycle, leading into the next review, it may be worth considering whether tenured capacity could be boosted to enable more master's students to complete rigorous dissertations. At present, dissertations are undertaken by only one or two students.

We noted a certain level of discouragement for those wishing to pursue this route, which appears to be partly structural in nature, as students would need a supervisory committee that includes a member of the tenured staff.

In sum, congratulations to everyone who has been involved with this programme.



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Susan Robertson	
Andrea Young	
Mirjam Hauck	
Josefina Sala	
Nicoletta Michael	

Date: 18/06/2026