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External Evaluation Report (Joint - E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:** University of Nicosia
Collaborative Institution(s): University of Patras
- **Town:** Nicosia/Cyprus - Patra/Greece
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Education / Humanities and Social Sciences
- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Education Sciences in Preschool Education
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
In Greek:
Διαπολιτισμική Εκπαίδευση και Διαμεσολάβηση [2 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 120 ECTS, Μάστερ (M.Ed.), Εξ Αποστάσεως, Διαπανεπιστημιακό πρόγραμμα σπουδών με το Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών]
In English:
Intercultural Education and Mediation [2 academic years, 120 ECTS, Master of Education (M.Ed.), E-Learning, Joint programme with the University of Patras]
- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **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.

Here we report on the site visit to the UNIC to review the reaccreditation of the Masters in Intercultural Education and Mediation – a distance learning programme accredited in 2022, that is also a joint programme between the UNIC and the University of Patras. We met at the main UNIC campus on the 15th June, 2026 at 9.00 and began our work. The EEC appreciated the overall efforts across the day to ensure that we met with all of the interested parties, including students and alumni, stake-holders, teaching staff, administrators and programme coordinators. The EEC heard reports from the Vice Rectors for Faculty and Research at the U of Nicosia (in person) and also the U of Patras (online). The Administrative Officer for the Department for Education, Dr. Demetriou, ably supported our work. Over the course of the day we met the Internal Quality Assurance Team, Dean and Head of Department, the programme lead for this joint masters (Patras leads on the practicum component), stakeholders, administrators, students, and academics. The information provided was clear, though there are areas we will raise in the report where we had to request more information on enrolments and retention since the start of the programme and the marking rubrics. We were given an opportunity to visit some of the UNIC teaching rooms, though it is to be noted that this is an online programme. There were some challenges using the zoom interface mostly because of the poor quality of the sound pick-up. However, we appreciated the persistence of the students and stakeholders regarding being able to make their views heard.

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
Christothea Herodotou	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.

Policy for quality assurance

This distance, joint, Master of Education in Intercultural Education and Mediation (MEIEM) is oversighted by the Distance Learning Unit (recruitment, portal, assessment grades, certificates), the School of Education and Department of Education at the UNIC (teaching staff and course delivery) and the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education (practicum design and placements), U of Patras.

The policies for quality assurance at the level of the university and at the level of the School and Department are clear and visible.

The EEC was impressed with the quality assurance cycle that operates at multiple levels of the university to ensure quality assurance. These are detailed in the paperwork and the EEC commends the University for the detailed description of these processes and also how they are implemented.

We were also impressed with the QA processes that support the evaluation and accreditation of programmes; that a representative body supports the process that will lead into the eventual submission of the reaccreditation document. Evaluators at the Departmental level, an internal and one external, are appointed two years after the launch of the program and who work with the Programme Coordinator to deliver the documentation. This in our view is very effective. It keeps the need for the review and revision on the horizon as part of ongoing processes of QA.

Policies are also in place to ensure that appropriate structures, regulations and processes are adhered to, that teaching, administrative staff and students take on their responsibilities in quality assurance, and that new issue areas, like AI are engaged with.

Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

The MEd in Intercultural Education and Mediation is a distance learning joint programme between the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras with face-to-face practicum. The program mostly attracts Greek students – largely as the language of instruction is Greek.

The duration of the programme is 2 years and is developed around 120 ECTS; this is made up of 30 ECTS; the opportunity to choose elective courses of 60 ECTS; the face-to-face practical training of 30 ECTS and the optional allocation of 30 ECTS for conducting a postgraduate thesis and get exempted from three specialization elective courses.

We note here that this has a longer ECT requirement than seemingly equivalent Masters in this area (typically 90 ECTS) – but it is the practicum that adds the additional 30 credits and time demands. This has caused some issues in terms of recognition of value and worth by the authorities in that a 90 ECTS is treated the same as 120 ECTS meaning the practicum is not valued and rewarded appropriately. We believe that this ought to be. The practicum that is very well thought in terms of design, knowledge and skill development makes this MEd an excellent pedagogical and professional masters whose additionality ought to be valued. We understand that discussions have been engaged in with the relevant authorities and we hope this comes to the outcome that it deserves.

This programme of studies 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. An on-going monitoring and review model is in place.

The programme of study presents clear, accurate, up to date and readily accessible information

that is published. The objectives, intended learning outcomes, qualification award, teaching and learning assessment procedures are clearly articulated and presented. The admission requirements of a Bachelor's degree with a statement to accompany the application are also well described and appropriate.

Public information

Selection criteria for the program, intended learning outcomes, the qualification awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures, and learning opportunities available to the students are clear and outlined in documents and the presentation during the site visit. Completion rates and attrition rates were not clear from the documents but were provided on site.

Information management

The Distance Learning Unit collects information on the students who apply and are offered places, their progress through the courses, whether they are engaged on a weekly basis in activities, their examination results, student assessment outcomes, and graduation. However we would have liked to see examples for the programme under review, including profiles of the students, numbers of students facing progress issues, completions and so on. We requested figures on these aspects which in our view are critical to the ensuring the programme is sustainable and for strategic purposes.

Student satisfaction is monitored and is used by teachers to improve their courses. The possibilities of learning analytics using digital data from the courses – collected by the Distance Learning Unit, are effective used.

Strengths

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

The quality assurance processes, structures, and regulations are transparent and appropriate.

Programme collaborators expressed a desire to engage ongoing review, guided by critical reflection.

The design of the programme and the processes planned for on-going monitoring and review are comprehensive. The sequence of courses is purposeful and coherent. The student workload is appropriate for the ECTS that they receive. The structure of the programme follows the European Credit Transfer System.

The collaboration between the UNIC and U of Patras, as well as the collaboration between the Distance Learning Unit and the School of Education and Department is outstanding.

The inclusion of a practicum to develop deep and meaningful knowledge, skills and experiences is what makes this MEd stand out.

Experienced supportive staff with respect to distance learning and educational technology.

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 encourage the U of Patras to continue to thicken the partnership with organisations delivering the practicum – including how this partnership can also provide ongoing opportunities for building a community of practice.

We were not clear how information on the MEIEM is communicated by the Distance Learning Unit to the Coordinator and the Department regarding the recruitment, retention, and completion cycle of the students and how this information is used to think about the ongoing sustainability of the programme.

We feel that a diagram and set of paragraphs outlining who, what, how often and who actions what regarding recruitment, retention and completion by unit and the overall course ought to be included in any future self assessment reports. This will enable the EEC to feel confident that this information is being considered and used.

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 Distance Learning Unit (DLU) is managing all issues related to distance learning study such as final exam arrangements and graduation checks. Within this unit, the e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit is responsible for the pedagogical support of faculty and distance learning academic programmes while the Faculty Training and Development Unit coordinates all faculty training and support activities. It provides induction courses for students regarding technologies (Blackboard, Proctorio, videoconferencing system, etc) and courses to faculty regarding distance learning teaching and technologies. Amongst the courses offered are two courses focused on how GenAI can be used in teaching and learning. Blackboard is the virtual learning environment students use to access online content. This is supported by the Engageli video conferencing system. Each course offers a minimum of 9 hours of teleconferences (webinars), which are scheduled throughout the 12 weeks of the semester.

There is an assessment framework in place allocating 60% to summative assessment (final exam) and 40% to individual assignments and weekly interactive activities. Assessment criteria are only briefly stated in study guides (e.g., structure and organisation, documentation of views and references) and it is not clear what weighting is allocated to each criterion. Also, assessment rubrics do not present qualitative grading criteria for each of the assessed activities (e.g., "what does excellent look like?").

There is a study guide for each course detailing learning objectives, content and weekly interactive activities. Some guides present a range of weekly interactive activities such as quizzes, discussion forums, wiki collaborations, case study analysis and engagement with video and other external resources. Other courses are heavily focused on a single interactive activity such as group work and posting of work in the forum (the forum is used as a repository of answers rather than a place for students to discuss and exchange ideas). There is limited information on how group work should take place (in most cases there are no instructions about how students should form groups and what role each student should have in the group). It would be important that the reading list of each course is updated particularly given the literature arising from global competences, interculturality and SDG4.7.

The practical and theoretical elements of the programme are well connected. The programme includes a mandatory Practicum with a total workload of 750 hours, corresponding to 30 ECTS credits, of which 500 hours involve educational and intervention work within a host institution (primary and secondary schools, public organizations dealing with migration, international organizations, etc.) and 250 hours complementary activities such as seminars, independent study, collaboration with advisors, and maintaining a portfolio.

Strengths

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

- A very well equipped and knowledgeable DLU.
- Study guides for each course, including a detailed guide for the Practicum.
- Appropriate assessment methodology including weekly assessed interactive activities.

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.

- Study guides should be reviewed to ensure that a range of interactive activities are used within each module that effectively support peer learning and communication.
- Instructions should be given as to the processes of implementing group work and how forums should be used to enable conversational learning.
- Assessment rubrics should be produced for each major assessed activity (individual assignment, thesis, etc.) and include both quantitative and descriptive information of grades.
- Reading lists of each course should be reviewed and updated given international literature.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	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 EEC found that the University has appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure the competence and continuous development of the teaching staff involved in the programme. Recruitment, promotion and staff development are regulated through institutional policies and procedures. The academic staff teaching in the programme have qualifications and expertise that are relevant to the programme, and their profiles are appropriate to support the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

The DLU offers a structured and accredited training programme focusing on online pedagogy, digital technologies and innovative teaching methods. The training lasts 12 weeks and, according to the information provided during the visit, 83% of academic staff have completed it successfully. In addition to formal training, the Unit provides ongoing support to faculty members, both through collective workshops and individual guidance, helping them to design, deliver and continuously improve their online teaching.

The teaching staff involved in the programme appear suitably qualified and experienced. Their research interests and publications are related to the programme's subject areas. The programme also benefits from the participation of staff from both the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras, reflecting the collaborative nature of the joint degree. The University of Patras contributes to the teaching of two compulsory and two elective courses and coordinates and supervises the practicum component.

During the meetings, the EEC observed a strong commitment from faculty members to supporting students and maintaining the quality of teaching and learning.

The University has established procedures for evaluating teaching performance. Student evaluation questionnaires are administered every semester and the results are shared with the individual faculty member, the programme coordinators, the department and the School. Faculty members also complete a self-evaluation report every two years. The EEC was informed that teaching performance is taken into account in promotion procedures, although it is not linked to direct financial rewards. By comparison, research activity benefits from dedicated institutional support mechanisms, including sabbatical leave every five years for eligible staff. This suggests a stronger institutional incentive structure for research than for teaching excellence.

The number and status of the teaching staff appear adequate to support the programme. According to the documentation provided, the programme is supported by 34 faculty members, including 8 full-time academic staff from the University of Nicosia, 4 full-time academic staff from the University of Patras and 22 part-time Special Teaching Faculty members. The EEC notes that a substantial proportion of the courses are delivered by part-time faculty. However, the qualifications and expertise of these staff members appear highly relevant to the programme, and the Committee found no evidence that this staffing model negatively affects programme quality, coordination or sustainability.

Faculty members indicated that efforts are made to maintain a reasonable balance between teaching and research responsibilities, and institutional support for research contributes to sustaining scholarly activity.

Overall, the EEC considers that the programme complies with the standards related to teaching staff recruitment and development, staff qualifications and status, and the integration of teaching and research.

The EEC notes that student feedback is systematically collected through regular evaluation procedures and that examples of positive feedback regarding the Practicum component were presented during the visit. However, the Committee did not receive the overall results of student satisfaction surveys for the programme. Access to these data, including response rates and trends over time, would have facilitated a more comprehensive assessment of the student experience and the effectiveness of quality enhancement measures.

Strengths

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

Highly committed and motivated teaching staff. During the meetings, the EEC observed a strong commitment to teaching and student support. Faculty members demonstrated a genuine concern for student engagement and described a variety of strategies to encourage participation, interaction and personalised follow-up in the online environment.

Well-qualified academic staff with expertise closely aligned to the programme. The programme benefits from a core group of full-time academics with strong academic and research profiles in areas directly related to intercultural education, inclusion, mediation and educational research.

Strong and mature collaboration between the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras. The EEC found the cooperation between the two institutions to be well established and effective. Roles and responsibilities appear clearly defined, particularly regarding the Practicum component, which is primarily coordinated by the University of Patras.

Comprehensive pedagogical and technical support for distance learning. The DLU provides structured training, continuous professional development opportunities and ongoing support to academic staff. This support system appears well developed and contributes to maintaining the quality of online teaching.

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.

Although student evaluations of teaching are systematically collected and shared with faculty members and programme management, the EEC was not provided with sufficient information regarding the procedures used to analyse these results and translate them into improvement actions. In particular, it was not clear how the programme responds to consistently low teaching evaluations, whether additional support or mentoring is provided to faculty members when needed, or how excellent teaching performance is recognised and encouraged.

Furthermore, the EEC was not provided with aggregated student satisfaction data for the programme, including overall satisfaction levels, response rates and trends over time. The availability of such information would have enabled a more comprehensive assessment of the student experience and provided stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of the programme's quality assurance and enhancement processes.

In future reports, the University should systematically present programme-level student satisfaction data, including overall satisfaction levels, response rates and trends over time. Such information represents a key indicator of programme quality and would provide the EEC with a more robust evidence base for assessing the student experience and the effectiveness of quality enhancement measures.

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.

Admission criteria require students to hold an undergraduate degree from an accredited university. In practice, students in possession of a B.Ed. in education are automatically granted admission to the programme given that the master's is in the same field and that there are more places available than applications received. Most of the students admitted to the course are consequently teachers from Greece, unsurprisingly given that course delivery is in Greek and online.

The first port of call for over 5,000 distance learning students is the DLU. They respond to questions on all matters of concern to e-learning students exclusively, such as admissions, registration and orientating them towards the relevant services for health and welfare support. They provide students with information and guidelines, monitor and collect statistics concerning for example student participation, and report to the appropriate faculty members. If a student shows cause for concern, such as failure to log onto the platform and engage with learning, the DLU notifies faculty members who can communicate directly with the students to establish the reasons for such inactivity and warn the student of the potential consequences of a failure on their part to engage with the learning (after repeated warnings, the student can be removed from the course). This appears to be an important mechanism to identify potential problems early on and flag them up to faculty members for further action. The division of responsibilities between the two partner institutions (Nicosia and Patras Universities) are clearly defined relating to the organisation of the Practicum and the administrative needs of the students, with all administrative and organisational questions being handled by the DLU and all matters pertaining to the Practicum being dealt with by the Patras University partners.

Certification is initially digital using Blockchain which allows for prompt delivery and enduring localisation of diplomas.

Strengths

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

The outstanding strength of this programme appears to be the Practicum. Throughout discussions with academic staff and students, emphasis was placed on the formative and rewarding nature of this opportunity to put theoretical learning directly into practice in situ. It was clear that the staff involved in securing and coordinating with Practicum partners and monitoring student progress during the Practicum are extremely committed, professional and inspirational in the eyes of students and stakeholders. This University initiative to support both students and institutions where high levels of cultural diversity are present (such as schools with high numbers of migrant pupils) is ethically commendable and of great importance with regards to social cohesion and democratic citizenship, as outlined by European institutions such as the Council of Europe. Learning is anchored in the Practicum context, where students are encouraged to take on the role of a team member, conduct a needs assessment with examples from their contexts, bring in target plans, suggest a list of appropriate, theoretically anchored activities, and produce an assessment plan using demographics and contextual information from their settings. Participants highlighted the meaningful ways in which theoretical knowledge informed ethical, appropriate and effective practices on the ground in contexts of potential/actual tensions between diverse cultural groups. Students, in effect acted as catalysers in an ongoing process of adaptation to challenging and rapidly evolving contexts of diversity.

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.

This particular M. Ed. programme is slightly longer, is attributed more ECTS, has a significant Practicum element and is therefore more demanding in terms of commitment and financial investment on the part of the students than other similar programmes. However, the main (future) employer of these post graduate students, namely the Greek Ministry of Education, does not attribute greater recognition in terms of professional advancement. This is unfortunate as the substantial Practicum element sets this programme apart and ahead of other similar programmes. Further communications with the Greek authorities should continue in order to sensitise them to the added value of this particular course.

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.

Teaching and learning resources; weekly interactive activities are set per each course. Some courses successfully use a diverse set of activities while others are rather limited in terms of the types of activities utilized (e.g., only group work) (See also Section 2). There are plans to enrich the types of activities used through, for example, the use of online simulation and game-like tools. The DLU effectively supports the design and implementation of online courses, while it also monitors the quality of live courses, through an operations manual for quality assurance and internal training e.g., checking number of teleconferences scheduled. Library resources are accessible online. Human support is provided via the Centre for Research and Counselling Services, the provision of academic counselling, and special administrative support for distance learning students. Blackboard analytics are accessible by both staff and students and aim to help with monitoring the academic progress of students. Students are asked to provide anonymous feedback in the end of their studies which is used to improve the design of courses.

The **Physical Resources** – meaning the premises, libraries, study facilities, and IT infrastructures were excellent and able to support the study programme, although less relevant for this e-learning programme. The library has a huge collection of sources, which can be accessed digitally. The Library collaborates with other university libraries in Cyprus, resulting in a vast collection of available resources.

The **Human Support Resources** are excellent. The university offers student welfare and academic support services. The **Centre for Research and Counselling Services** (KESY) plays a key role here. KESY are available to all the students. The main aim is to provide individualized psychological support to students who face a series of personal challenges, including academic and learning, adjustment, abuse, or family issues. Counselling services are offered either in individual or group sessions, but probably individually only for online students.

Student support is targeted based on the specific area of concern. For example, and Erasmus Officer promotes student mobility and handles the overall programme. It is not clear whether any of the MEIEM students have accessed these opportunities. That said, the students have a very good experience in the practicum and this might not feel the need to access Erasmus, though technically they could take up a practicum experience as part of the their Erasmus placement.

Strengths

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

- Teaching and learning resources are appropriate for the programme and successfully combine theoretical and practical elements.
- There is sufficient human and learning support in place for online students, mainly provided by UNIC while Practicum support provided by Patras university.
- One main strength are the teaching and learning resources of the e-learning programme. These are located in the DLU. This gives the possibility to update the technology, tools, and pedagogy to the latest developments.
- The other resources are mainly focused on on-site students but also available for e-learning students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- There should be a plan detailing how staff should engage with Blackboard learning analytics (how to read and use the data and how to support at-risk students) including reminding staff frequently to check on this data.
- Simulations and game-based applications should be embedded in the design of online courses.

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

6. Eligibility (*ALL ESG*)

Sub-areas

6.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement

6.2 The joint programme

6.3 Added value of the joint programme

6.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement

Standards

- *The joint programme is offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems.*
- *The terms and conditions of the joint programme are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:*
 - *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
 - *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, including funding, sharing of costs and income, resources for mobility of staff and students*
 - *Admission and selection procedures for students*
 - *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
 - *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*
 - *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*

6.2 The joint programme

Standards

- *The partner universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes.*
- *The joint programme is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design, delivery and further development of the programme.*
- *Aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated, including a joint syllabus, language policy, as well as an account of the intended added value of the programme.*
- *Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.*

6.3 Added value of the joint programme

Standards

The joint programme leads to the following added values:

- *Increases internationalisation at the institutions.*
- *Stimulates multinational collaboration on teaching at a high level and makes cooperation binding.*
- *Increases transparency between educational systems.*

- *Develops study and research alternatives in accordance with emerging needs.*
- *Improves educational and research collaboration.*
- *Offers students an expanded and innovative arena for learning.*
- *Increases highly educated candidates' employability and motivation for mobility in a global labour market.*
- *Increases European and non-European students' interest in the educational programme.*
- *Increases competence at partner institutions through cooperation and implementation of a best practice system.*
- *Increases the institution's ability to change in step with emerging needs.*
- *Contributes to tearing down cultural barriers, both personal and institutional.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Does the joint study programme conform to the requirements of a study programme offered at the specific level?*
- *Is there a system that assures the quality of joint provision and guarantees that the aims of the programme are met?*
- *Do the mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the joint study programme take into consideration the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)? Are they adopted by all the universities involved?*
- *Is the division of responsibilities in ensuring quality clearly defined among the partner universities?*
- *Is relevant information about the programme, e.g. admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures, well documented and published by taking into account the specific needs of students?*
- *What is the added value of the programme of study?*
- *Is there a sustainable funding strategy among the partner universities? Explain.*

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 the joint programme operates within the legal frameworks of both participating countries and is supported by a formal cooperation agreement between the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras. The agreement clearly defines the responsibilities of each institution, including admissions, programme administration, financial management and the supervision of the practicum component.

The programme is genuinely offered jointly and benefits from the active involvement of both institutions in its design, delivery and development. The curriculum is jointly structured, with clearly defined responsibilities and governance arrangements that support the implementation of the programme.

The programme's aims, intended learning outcomes and curriculum are clearly articulated and aligned with the field of Intercultural Education and Mediation. The study plan, learning outcomes and ECTS allocation are coherent and provide an appropriate balance between theoretical preparation, research training and supervised professional

practice. The collaboration between the two institutions adds significant value through its international and intercultural dimension and through the integration of academic and professional learning experiences.

The programme benefits from the established internal quality assurance systems of both partner institutions. Student evaluations, academic monitoring procedures and institutional quality assurance mechanisms are implemented. However, evidence of a fully integrated joint quality assurance framework operating specifically at programme level could be further documented.

Admission requirements are clearly defined and include an appropriate academic background, supporting documentation and a motivation statement. The EEC was informed that all applicants meeting the minimum admission requirements are currently admitted due to the available capacity. Assessment procedures are clearly communicated, with final grades based on a combination of examination performance and continuous assessment by the instructor.

Students are provided with academic guidance and support through programme coordinators, academic staff and Practicum supervisors. Mobility opportunities are available through the partner institutions; however, programme-specific data regarding student participation and mobility outcomes were not provided during the evaluation process.

The financial arrangements between the partner institutions are clearly defined. Nevertheless, while the documentation explains the operational distribution of financial responsibilities and revenues, a more explicit presentation of the programme's long-term joint financial sustainability strategy would strengthen the evidence base.

Strengths

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

Well-established and mature partnership between the University of Nicosia and the University of Patras: The EEC observed a strong level of collaboration, mutual trust and effective coordination between the two institutions. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and there is no evidence of unnecessary duplication of functions.

Clearly defined governance and division of responsibilities: Academic, administrative and financial responsibilities are appropriately allocated between the partner institutions, facilitating the efficient management of the joint programme.

Added value through the complementary expertise of the two partner institutions: The programme combines the academic and distance learning program strengths of the University of Nicosia with the extensive experience of the University of Patras in the design, coordination and supervision of the practicum component. This collaboration enriches the curriculum, strengthens the link between theory and professional practice, and provides students with a broader and more international learning experience.

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 mobility opportunities are available through the partner institutions, programme-specific evidence regarding student participation, incoming and outgoing mobility rates, and the impact of mobility on students' learning

experience was not provided during the visit. Future reports should include systematic programme-level mobility data and analysis.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
6.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	Compliant
6.2	The joint programme	Compliant
6.3	Added value of the joint programme	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 (Consider also the added value of the joint programme).

1. The Master's offers a unique and commendable vision, combining cultural understanding with mediation experiences in diverse practical settings (e.g., legal, medical, refugee contexts). At 120 ECTS, it provides added value beyond a standard Master's, and this vision has been strongly endorsed by staff, students, and stakeholders alike.
2. The partnership model is highly effective, with each institution contributing distinct strengths—the DLU excels in online delivery, while the University of Patras offers deep, theorised expertise in the practicum. Daily communication between partners ensures a seamless and unified student experience.
3. The quality of teaching, administrative, and technical staff is exceptional. The DLU, in particular, is commended for its focus on technological innovation and its development of a one-stop-shop approach that supports students and academics from enrolment to course completion.
4. The programme has demonstrated real-world impact, with students incorporating moral, ethical, and political values into their thinking, and stakeholders speaking movingly about its purpose and outcomes. It is a programme that clearly deserves continued institutional support.

Three Areas for Consideration for Improvement

1. Student data—including intake numbers, completion rates, intermissions, and fail rates—should be made explicit, visible, and included as standard in all evaluation materials, rather than requiring external reviewers to request them.
2. Assessment rubrics across all course types should be clearly documented and included upfront in review materials. Both partner universities are urged to embed these rubrics, along with the above student data, as core components of all ongoing and future review cycles.
3. Set into place in the next year a close review of reading lists and update them with regard to the most recent research.



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Susan Robertson	
Andrea Young	
Christothea Herodotou	
Josefina Sala	
Nicoletta Michael	

Date: 16/6/2026