



## UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TEACHING

The University of Cyprus, in promoting recognition of quality and excellence in teaching, has developed a policy for ensuring quality teaching at the Institution. Ensuring quality teaching:

1. Contributes to the realization of the Institution's vision to establish itself as a leading university of cultural enterprise, a prominent social contributor to society, and a reference point for the global scientific community.
2. Takes place in close conjunction with the advancement of research, internalization, learning, entrepreneurship, and the relations with the alumni.

According to *UCY Strategic Plan 2016-2025*, excellence in teaching and learning constitutes a major operational objective and a strategic goal aiming at strengthening competitiveness, as well as the international recognition of UCY among the world's top Universities. Analytically, excellence in teaching and learning aims at:

1. Strengthening the mechanisms of internal evaluation and improvement of quality teaching.
2. Improving the faculty to student ratio.
3. Creating opportunities for real-world work experience in the context of pursuing academic programs.
4. Developing the infrastructure, mechanisms, and programs of study for open and distance learning.
5. Promoting critical thinking and student participation in university life.

### **Objectives of the Policy**

The main objectives of the policy include:

1. The improvement of the quality of teaching at UCY.
2. The evolution of a culture for accomplishing quality teaching at UCY.
3. The monitoring and assurance of quality teaching for the purposes of self-assessment and self-improvement.
4. The alignment of UCY's policy on quality teaching with European and international standards and directives.

## **Actions**

The proposed actions are based on three main areas of activities:

1. Recognition and dissemination of good teaching practices and self-assessment of teaching.
2. Initial training, ongoing faculty professional development, and networking.
3. Mechanisms for support and continuous improvement.

These actions adhere to the principles of the framework for quality teaching as proposed by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) (“Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education area” (ESG), Part 1: Internal Quality Assurance - <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>).

### **Area I: Recognition and dissemination of good teaching practices and self- assessment of teaching**

#### **Actions:**

#### **A. Identification, documentation, and dissemination of good teaching practices at UCY**

This is accomplished as follows:

1. The Centre for Teaching and Learning organizes open discussions for the teaching staff to discuss and exchange ideas on good quality teaching practices.
2. Establishment of the “Quality Teaching Award” granted to a faculty member every two years.
3. Identification of good teaching practices and publicization on the webpage of the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

#### **B. Instruments for self-assessment and improvement of teaching**

This is accomplished as follows:

1. Use of appropriate instruments for evaluating teaching taking into consideration the particularities of each course (i.e., large-audience courses, small-audience courses, labs, tutorials). Teaching staff are expected to develop instruments for self-assessment (e.g., in-class evaluation questionnaires, peer

observation tools, evaluation tools for student learning/progress) or to adapt existing instruments for formative and summative evaluation of courses.

2. The Centre for Teaching and Learning provides training for teaching staff in the uses of a variety of self-assessment instruments (e.g., direct communication with students, open discussions, use of a teaching diary and videotaped lessons for teacher evaluation, formative assessment and electronic forms of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative assessment, learning and teaching analytics).
3. Peer observation is used as part of the Institution's quality assurance procedures. These procedures safeguard the academic autonomy of faculty and the pragmatic differences between subject matters regarding teaching and learning goals, needs, and priorities. Teaching staff, who volunteer to serve as peer observers, are first certified as peer observers by attending a mandatory training program offered by the Centre of Teaching and Learning at UCY.
4. Peer observation is used with groups of participants where the roles of the evaluator and the evaluated alternate.

## **Area II: Initial training, ongoing faculty professional development, and networking**

### **Actions:**

- A. A teaching certification program is offered to UCY teaching staff under the supervision and coordination of the Centre for Teaching and Learning**

This is accomplished as follows:

1. A training program for ensuring quality teaching in higher education is developed and taught by current UCY faculty members. The program leads to the awarding of a teaching certificate. The training program is mandatory for new UCY faculty members and teaching staff, and open to all current UCY staff as well as other interested parties not affiliated with UCY. For UCY staff the program is offered free of charge, whereas tuition fees apply for people outside UCY.
2. A number of introductory seminars covering a variety of topics, such as, UCY Policies and Operation, as well as workshops on how to use Blackboard in teaching, are offered at the beginning of each academic year. These seminars are mandatory for new faculty members and teaching staff and optional for all others.

## **B. Ongoing professional development for faculty and teaching staff**

This is accomplished as follows:

1. Participation in the professional development activities offered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning at UCY.
2. Provision of incentives to UCY teaching staff for participating in the introductory seminars on the policies and operation of UCY, and in the workshops on the uses of Blackboard. One incentive for those participating in the teaching certification program is an increase, by a specific percentage, of their research activities funding under Article 311.
3. Opportunities for taking online courses about quality teaching in tertiary education.
4. The Centre for Teaching and Learning devises and announces calls for the implementation of innovative teaching interventions across all disciplines at UCY.
5. Establishment of a Mentoring Program in ensuring good quality teaching. Participation in the mentoring program counts as service to the profession and stated as such on a curriculum vitae. The Mentor Award is proposed as an incentive for participating in the program.

## **C. Networking with other University Centers for Teaching and Learning**

### **Area III: Mechanisms for support and continuous improvement**

**Actions:**

#### **A. Support faculty members in the organization, design, and continuous improvement of course content**

This is accomplished as follows:

1. Faculty members are required to systematically and regularly upgrade the design, content, bibliography, instructional activities, and evaluation methods of the courses they teach.
2. Continuous professional development in the latest advancements concerning the teaching of all disciplines. Provision of incentives for participating in conferences or organizing conferences on the teaching of each academic discipline.
3. Ongoing support and encouragement for faculty members to use Blackboard in the teaching of their courses.

4. UCY provides teaching staff with the appropriate infrastructure, resources, and technological tools to support teaching.
5. UCY recognizes quality in teaching, and increases, by a specific percentage, the funding under Article 311.
6. The bibliography for each course is submitted in relevant databases and is accessible to all students.
7. Rotation of faculty, if deemed necessary, in teaching core courses applies.
8. The Centre for Teaching and Learning at UCY supports teaching staff in developing teaching portfolios as a tool for self-evaluation and self-improvement.

## **B. Support to improve students' quality of learning**

This is accomplished as follows:

1. Use of appropriate teaching strategies for transforming adequately course content taking into consideration the nature of each discipline.
2. Integration of technology in teaching for enhancing student learning and for the formative assessment of students and courses.
3. Provision of opportunities to UCY students to study or work (e.g., practical training, internships) at academic and industrial organizations in and out of Cyprus.
4. Provision of opportunities to students for gaining work experience during their studies.
5. Support students' involvement in global activities such as international meetings, international forums, and international competitions.
6. Promote the development of students' critical and creative thinking within the context of the courses taught by engaging students in complex problem solving and by encouraging them to develop a critical stance toward learning by exploring and evaluating multiple perspectives and solutions to a problem based on criteria.
7. Provision of opportunities to students for taking general-education courses for developing critical thinking skills, such as courses on logical reasoning.
8. Easy accessibility of students to teaching staff and academic advisors.
9. Monitor and report student academic progress and progress in fundamental transversal skills at the end of each academic semester.
10. Professors and Associate Professors undertake the teaching of mandatory courses during the freshman and sophomore years of students.
11. Support the teaching of courses by supplementing them with tutorials taught by Master and PhD students.
12. Develop and improve students' transversal and other skills through seminars offered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Career's Office.
13. The Social Support Office at UCY provides online information on the Internet to inform students about the University's policy to support students with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and socio-economic problems.

14. The Counseling and Psychological Support Office provides online information on the Internet about the services that are available to students facing difficulties during their studies.
15. Increase the duration of the Spring Semester from 13 weeks to 14 weeks to allow for more teaching time.
16. Decrease the number of students registered in each course (up to 30-40 students in mandatory courses, 40-50 students in elective courses, 15-20 students in tutorials and 15-20 students in labs).
17. Introduce courses on entrepreneurship, innovation, and copyright law in all Faculties.
18. Publication of doctoral theses in English, French or any other international language and at internationally renowned publishers.
19. Introduction of core courses on ethics as they arise through the rapid development of Science and Technology.
20. Establishment of the interim examinations week so as to assist students with exam preparation.

### **C. Support provided to academic departments**

This is accomplished as follows:

1. Continuous development, self-evaluation, and external evaluation of the academic programs offered so they can remain comparable and competitive to similar programs in other universities abroad.
2. Support to academic departments, so they become able to implement priority actions, for improving their functions and the programs of study they offer.
3. Promoting joint academic programs in cooperation with notable international partners.
4. Development of academic programs with international character, such as, for example, degrees in international relations, regional issues, and foreign languages and cultures.
5. Continuous support and monitoring to systematically improve, update, and upgrade the websites of academic departments and the personal websites of academic staff.