

Akkreditierungsagentur
im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales
Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences



Assessment Report

**for the Application of
Cyprus International University (CIU), Northern Cyprus
Faculty of Arts and Sciences,
for the Accreditation of the Bachelor Study Program
“Molecular Biology and Genetics”
Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)**

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July 22, 2025

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Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Overview	7
2.1	Procedure-related documents	7
2.2	Information about the University	9
2.3	Structural data of the study program.....	10
3	Expert Report.....	13
3.1	Program aims and their implementation	14
3.2	Structure of the study program	19
3.3	Admission and Feasibility.....	26
3.4	Examination system and transparency	30
3.5	Teaching staff and material equipment	33
3.6	Quality assurance	39
3.7	Gender equality and equal opportunities	43
4	Conclusion.....	46
5	Decision of the accreditation commission	48

1 Introduction

The Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (AHPGS) is an interdisciplinary and multi-professional organization. Its mission is to evaluate Bachelor and Master programs in the fields of health and social sciences, as well as in related domains such as medicine or psychology. By conducting accreditation and recommendation procedures, the AHPGS contributes to the improvement of the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, the higher education institutions remain responsible for implementing the quality assurance recommendations made by the AHPGS.

The AHPGS is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) since 2009. Since 2004, the AHPGS has been a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). In 2006, the AHPGS joined the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). In 2009, the AHPGS also became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and since 2012 a member of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). In 2023, the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) recognized the AHPGS as an agency with recognition status for 10 years.

In carrying out accreditation procedures, the AHPGS follows the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). In the present case, the decision regarding the accreditation of the study program is carried out by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission based on the following accreditation criteria:

1. Program aims and their implementation
2. Structure of the study program
3. Admission and Feasibility
4. Examination System and Transparency
5. Teaching Staff and Material Equipment
6. Quality Assurance
7. Gender equality and equal opportunities

I. The University's application

The AHPGS verifies the sufficiency of the documents submitted by the University, namely the Self-Evaluation Report and its corresponding annexes. These are to fulfil the assessment spheres as well as the AHPGS standards. With this information, the AHPGS produces a summary, which is to be approved by the University and subsequently made available for the expert group, together with all other documentation.

II. Written review

The main documents are reviewed by the expert group assigned by the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS. This is done in order to verify the compliance of the study program with the applicable accreditation criteria. Consequently, the experts comprise a short summary regarding the study programs.

III. On-site visit (peer-review)

The experts carry out a site visit at the University. During this visit, discussions are held with members of the University, which include University and department administration, degree program management, teachers, and students. These discussions provide the expert group with details about the study program beyond the written documents. The task of the experts during the site visit is to verify and evaluate the objectives of the program and its projected study results, its structure, staff, material resources, course of studies, methods of assessment (selection of students, assessment of achievements, students' support), as well as the program management (program administration, external assurance of study quality).

Following the site visit, the expert group evaluates the fulfilment of the criteria based on the results of the visit and the documents submitted by the HEI. This Assessment Report is based on the results of the visit, the written review of the study programs, and the documents submitted by the University. Finally, the Assessment Report is made available to the University for the opportunity to issue a response opinion.

The Assessment Report as well as the University's response opinion – together with the provided documents – is submitted to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS.

IV. The AHPGS accreditation decision

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS examines the documentation made available in the process of application, namely the University's self-evaluation report, its annexes, the Assessment Report, as well as the University's response opinion. These documents lay basis for the decision of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS regarding the accreditation of the study program.

2 Overview

2.1 Procedure-related documents

The University delegated the task of accrediting the following Bachelor study programs to AHPGS: “Nutrition and Dietetics (English)”, “Nutrition and Dietetics (Turkish)”, “Law (English)”, “Law (Turkish)”, “Physiotherapy (English)”, “Physiotherapy (Turkish)” and “Molecular Biology and Genetics” (English).

The Self-Evaluation Report for accreditation of the above-mentioned study programs (hereinafter the SER) of the Cyprus International University (hereinafter the University or CIU) was submitted to the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science (AHPGS) in electronic format on December 03, 2024. The decision regarding the accreditation of a study program is carried out by the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS. The contract between the CIU and the AHPGS was signed on the November 08, 2023.

On March 26, 2025 the AHPGS forwarded the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter OQ) pertaining to the application for accreditation for the study programs to the University. On April 14, 2025 the University submitted the answers to the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter AOQ) to the AHPGS in electronic format.

The application documentation submitted by the CIU follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Along with the application request towards accreditation of the Bachelor study program “Molecular Biology and Genetics”, the following additional documents can be found in the application package (the documents submitted by the University are numbered in the following order for easier referencing):

Specific documents for the study programs “Molecular Biology and Genetics”

Annex	Description
1	1-Module Descriptions
2	2-CV
3	3-Teaching Matrix
4	4-Demographic List of Active MBGE Students
5	5-Gender Distribution of MBGE Students

6	6-MBGE Student Club Magazine
7	7-Example Student Timetable
8	8-Partnerships with NGOs
9	9-Curriculum
10	10-SOLO Taxonomy
11	11-Minutes for the Development of MBGE Program
12	12-Graduates of MBGE Program Working in the Field
13	13-Questionnaire for Research and Teaching Activities
14	14-Evaluation Report from the Dean
15	15-Evaluation Form for Students
16	16-Volunteer Work
17	17-Graduates Satisfaction Survey Report
18	18-Student No. and Gender
19	19-Module Grade Reports
20	20-Course and Program Outcomes Matrix
21	21-Program Quality Outcome

Alongside the study-program-specific documents, the following documents pertain to all study program submitted for external evaluation:

Annex	Description
A	Student Admission Regulations
B	Student Advisory Services Regulations
C	Staff Employment Regulations
D	Staff Workload Regulations
E	Staff Workplace Survey
F	Scientific Incentive and Reward Principles
G	Academic and Administrative Staff Development Centre Directive
H	Quality Assurance Handbook
I	Quality and Assurance Board Directive
J	Exam Procedures Regulations
K	Exam Evaluation Principles
L	Project Proposal Form
M	Distance Learning Regulations
N	Disabled Student Regulation
O	Barrier-Free Campus Buildings

P	Psychological Counseling Directive
Q	Center of Excellence in Education and Teaching Regulations
R	Library Regulations
S	Turkish Higher Education Quality Council Document

The application, the open questions (OQ) and the answers to the open questions (AOQ) as well as the additional documents build the basis for the present summary. The layout bears no significance, as it solely reflects the agreed standard between the AHPGS and the University.

2.2 Information about the University

Cyprus International University (CIU) is a private university in Nicosia in Northern Cyprus. It functions under the auspices of the Levent Group of Companies. Due to the Levent Group's involvement in various sectors such as industry, commerce, food, automotive, construction, livestock production, and agriculture through its multiple companies, CIU offers valuable internship opportunities to its students based on their respective departments.

CIU was established in 1997 in response to the growing demand for English higher education and the need for institutions offering education in foreign languages in Türkiye, Northern Cyprus, and the broader region. The University emphasizes that it has obtained all necessary equivalency certifications and is officially listed in the catalogue of the Turkish Centre of Student Selection and Placement (OSYM) by The Turkish Higher Education Board (YOK). According to the University, the primary educational objective is to cultivate graduates with advanced proficiency in the English language and with the necessary professional skills to excel in their future careers. The University's teaching approach incorporates a student-centered model that leverages information and communication technologies, cross-disciplinary learning, and a strong focus on independent learning. As the University explains, this method aims to enable students to effectively acquire and utilize knowledge for optimal purposes. The University has established collaboration agreements with international universities and institutions. These agreements include reciprocal arrangements

and contribute to the recognition of the University's diploma on a global scale. Such collaborations are seen as an important means to broaden educational opportunities and provide students with international perspectives.

The University's mission is to help students attain the knowledge, skills, and progressive values that promote career opportunities, ensure sustainable living, and contribute to societal development. As the University explains, its student-centered approach, which combines cross-disciplinary learning and advanced technology, is designed to support these goals. Furthermore, the University notes its placement in global rankings, such as the UK-based Times Higher Education (THE) rankings and the UI Greenmetric evaluation, as evidence of its commitment to educational excellence, research, and innovation (SER 1.1).

In total, 46 undergraduate programs are provided across 12 Faculties and 6 Vocational Schools. Furthermore, the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research is responsible for postgraduate education and offers 21 PhD programs, 2 Professional Doctorate programs, and 41 Master programs. The Molecular Biology and Genetics (MBGE) Undergraduate Program was established in 2016 within the Department of Basic Sciences and Humanities inside the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. As of May 2024, there were 77 active students enrolled in the program, out of which 51 international students, 19 from Turkey and 7 from Northern Cyprus. Out of the 77 students, 64% are female, which the University acknowledges as a success of the outreach effort in welcoming female students from underrepresented countries. This success is linked to the efforts of the CIU's Women Empowerment Center. The faculty also has established collaboration agreements with various non-governmental organizations, enhancing opportunities for internships and practical training (SER 1.2).

2.3 Structural data of the study program

University	Cyprus International University
Faculty/Department	Faculty of Arts and Sciences/ Department of Basic Sciences and Humanities
Cooperation partner	- Turkish Council of Higher Education (YÖK),

	- Higher Education Planning, Supervision, Accreditation and Coordination Board of Northern Cyprus (YÖDAK).
Title of the study program	„Molecular Biology and Genetics”
Degree awarded	Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)
Organizational structure	Full-time, on-campus from Monday to Friday between 08:30 am and 07:30 pm, with some courses which can take place on Saturday
Language of Studies	English
Period of education	Eight semesters
Credit Hours (CH) according to the internal credit hour system	131 credit hours (equals 240 ECTS CP)
Hours per Credit	1 theory credit hour = 1 hour 1 laboratory credit hour = 2 hours
Workload	Total: 6.000 hours Contact hours: 2.212 hours Individual work: 3.788 hours Practice/Lab: 168 hours (Tutorial) + 1.260 (Lab)
Credits for the graduation project	3 credit hours (equals 6 ECTS CP)
Launch date of the study program	2016/2017
Time of admission	Fall and spring semester
Number of available places on the program	Approximately 40 (may be increased by the Rectorate)
Number of currently enrolled students	77
Number of graduates since launch date of the study program	15
Particular enrollment conditions	- Higher Education / Secondary Certificate - Evidence of English Language Competence - CIU Student Placement and Scholarship Ranking Examination

Tuition fees	5,843 € per year
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3 Expert Report

The site visit was carried out on May 07-08 2025, according to the previously agreed schedule. Representatives from the head office of AHPGS accompanied the expert group.

The expert group met on May 06, 2025 for preliminary talks prior to the site visit. They discussed the submitted application documents and the results of the written evaluation as well as questions that had been raised prior. Furthermore, they prepared the plan of the site visit at the University.

During the site visit, experts conducted discussions with the University management, representatives of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the chair, vice chair and the teaching staff of the program “Molecular Biology and Genetics” as well as with students currently studying in the program and alumni. Furthermore, they inspected the learning premises, such as lecture halls, seminar classrooms, library, and computer classes. Moreover, experts had the opportunity to examine the equipment and the capacity of the laboratories.

In the course of the site visit, the University submitted the following additional documents at the request of the experts:

- Diploma Supplements,
- list of graduation projects,
- student registration statistics,
- graduation semesters,
- dropout rates,
- publication list 2023-2025.

The Assessment Report is structured in compliance with the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The study program will be described and analyzed in a comprehensive manner below. The documents submitted by the University, the experts’ feedback to the documents, the observations made during the site visit, the results of discussions with the representatives of the University and the Faculty of

Arts and Sciences serve as the foundation for the statements made in the Assessment Report.

3.1 Program aims and their implementation

In accordance with ESG 1.2 Design and Approval of Programs

The study program focuses on specific qualification objectives. These objectives cover professional and interdisciplinary aspects and particularly refer to the domain of academic or artistic competences, competences necessary for a qualified employment, skills of social commitment and personal development.

Summary

According to the University, the program aims to provide global and multidisciplinary education, as well as training in basic, applied, and computational sciences through a wide range of theoretical and laboratory courses. A special focus is given to genetics, cellular, and molecular biology. The goal is to equip students with the knowledge and skills that allow them to develop their careers in various fields. The general vision is to be the leading undergraduate program in Molecular Biology and Genetics in Cyprus by bringing together a diverse group of students to be independent, skilled, and ethical researchers, who strive to be global leaders in scientific research and discovery while working for the betterment of societies and human life. Therefore, the educational objectives have been developed with the involvement of various parties including the department council, graduate students, and employers. Accordingly, the program aims to develop graduates who:

1. Find employment as a scientist within the local or international market in the areas related to the discipline of the program,
2. Continue with their education at graduate levels to enhance their knowledge, specialization and/or academic standing that may lead to a faculty position,
3. Take employment as a researcher within national or international research institutions,
4. Establish his or her own company in the area or be a partner in such a company.

The program outcomes are statements defining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students must have acquired by the time they graduate from the program. The program outcomes of the MBGE program are stated as follows:

- Identifying and using theoretical and applied knowledge as well as up-to-date laboratory techniques and analyzing methods in the MBGE field,
- Identifying problems related to MBGE,
- Designing and conducting experiments through hypothesis driven scientific research, as well as analyzing and interpreting data to find solutions to MBGE problems,
- Working independently and as a member of a research group in a multidisciplinary team setting,
- Applying principles of scientific research ethics and academic integrity,
- Interpreting, explaining and presenting primary scientific literature and novel finding in oral, written, and visual presentation forms,
- Evaluating experimental data and theoretical findings by using critical and analytical thinking techniques,
- Using the currently acceptable process of preparing research proposals and manuscripts for publishing in scientific journals,
- Applying the principles of MBGE in generating/finding solutions to social problems/issues,
- Identifying and implementing environmental and laboratory safety procedures,
- Identifying and applying the necessary professional skillset in projects and jobs involving independent and competitive careers in academia, industrial, medical or clinical research, science education, scientific writing and communication, health care, health care policy, and civil service.

MBGE course and their objectives as well as their learning outcomes are designed in parallel with the program educational objectives and program outcomes alike (Annex 1) (SER 3.1.1).

The MBGE program is structured to provide comprehensive scientific training within the biological sciences. With regards to scientific qualification, students undertake rigorous core coursework covering a range of biological topics including, for example, bioinformatics or biochemistry. This curriculum is designed to develop a deep understanding of the basic sciences with an emphasis on genetic principles including hypothesis-driven experimental design as well as ensuring

that students are well prepared for research and development. Additionally, the partnership with the Turkish Cypriot Biologists Association and the Rare Diseases Network in Northern Cyprus provides opportunities for students to engage in collaborative research and communal events while networking with scientists, researchers, and medical officials. According to the University, the program also places a strong emphasis on social responsibility, encouraging students to consider the ethical implications of their work and its impact on society. That is why courses in bioethics and ecology as well as evolutionary biology are incorporated into the curriculum to broaden students' perspectives and increase their sense of responsibility. Moreover, the partnership with the Universal Patient Rights Association in Northern Cyprus highlights the commitment of teaching students to be ethically driven global citizens. Additionally, students take a seminar called "Racial and social inequalities in genetics research" promoting ethical research practices while addressing the significance of diversity and inclusion. Finally, intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, independence, perseverance, and creativity are encouraged through extracurricular activities, interdisciplinary education, and student clubs (SER 3.1.2).

The MBGE program is designed to equip students with a wide range of methodological, learning, and social skills. These skills and competencies were designed according to the National Qualifications Framework of Higher Education in Turkey (NQF-HETR) which parallels the European Qualification Framework and Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL) and Bologna Process. Additionally, the program follows the regulations set by the higher education planning, evaluation, and coordination council of Northern Cyprus. The skills are described as follows (SER 3.1.3):

- Methodological skills: emphasis of rigorous experimental design and use of sophisticated laboratory equipment/software tools/data collection/statistical analysis; ability to critically evaluate primary scientific literature; independent learning and advanced level theoretical and practical knowledge supported by textbooks, online resources, and databases.
- Learning skills: self-directed learning, critical thinking and adaptive problem-solving; ability to engage with complex scientific questions and pursue independent research; share ideas and troubleshoot problems with multidisciplinary faculty in the department.
- Social skills: collaborative learning experiences including group projects, peer-to-peer teaching in classrooms, laboratory sessions, seminars on

campus, and student clubs; development of essential communication, teamwork, and leadership skills; ability to work effectively in diverse, multidisciplinary teams with students from all levels and backgrounds.

Graduates of the study program in Molecular Biology and Genetics have a wide range of career opportunities in various fields. Some possible career paths include the following:

- Research scientist: research laboratories conducting experiments, analyzing data, and contributing to scientific discoveries,
- Biotech industry: biotechnology companies involved in developing pharmaceuticals, genetic engineering, diagnostics, and other biotech products,
- Academia: professors, researchers or academic advisors in universities and research institutions,
- Genetic counseling: genetic counselors, helping individuals and families understand genetic conditions, assessing risks, and making informed decisions about their health,
- Forensic science: forensic labs analyzing DNA evidence, identifying genetic markers and assisting in criminal investigations,
- Pharmaceutical industry: pharmaceutical companies on drug development, clinical trials and regulatory affairs related to genetic and molecular research,
- Entrepreneurial opportunities: venture into the business world establishing their own national or international company or being partner in such company.

The program highlights the constant evolution of the molecular biology and genetics field, offering diverse opportunities for those with a background in these specialized areas (SER 3.2.1).

Overall, the labor market for MBGE is characterized by both promising opportunities and notable challenges. According to the University, the labor market in North Cyprus is expanding and developing as a hub for education and research in molecular biology and genetics. Especially the biotechnology industry is growing, driven by advancements in areas like gene editing, biopharmaceuticals, and precision medicine. Therefore, the graduates of the program can benefit from the job opportunities created. Besides that, North America is a major hub for job opportunities thanks to the high healthcare spending, advanced research facilities,

and substantial government, as well as Europe, Asia and Turkey, all expanding markets and increasing investments in biotechnological research. The use of biotechnology in agriculture is also creating a new opportunity on the labor market. Meanwhile, ethical and regulatory issues remain significant, for example in creating genetically modified organisms and advanced genetic treatments. Another challenge is the integration of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning in bioinformatics (SER 3.2.2).

To date, the MBGE program has 15 graduates, with the first cohort completing their studies in 2022. Although the graduate count is low due to the program's recent establishment, the University has successfully tracked 13 out of 15 graduates, achieving an 86% tracking rate. Notably, 76% of these tracked graduates are currently pursuing further education in Master's programs, including at CIU. With growing enrollment in the program, the number of graduates is expected to increase significantly in the near future.

Judgment

Under its strategic plan, CIU aims to improve its global rankings by securing international accreditation for all programs and achieving full institutional accreditation. Key investment priorities include recruiting additional academic staff, expanding campus capacity, and launching new programs such as Veterinary Medicine. To bolster research impact, CIU aims to steadily increase publication and citation rates by offering rewards for faculty research output.

From the experts' point of view, as one of the newer programs at CIU, the "Molecular Biology and Genetics" benefits from flexibility and room for innovation. Its small size allows for responsiveness to scientific trends and regional development needs. The program is well-positioned to evolve into a key player in biotechnology education and industry in the Eastern Mediterranean.

According to the experts, the Bachelor study program "Molecular Biology and Genetics" focuses on specific qualification objectives. These objectives cover professional and interdisciplinary aspects and particularly refer to the domain of academic competences, competences necessary for a qualified employment, skills of social commitment and personal development.

The stakeholders of the program confirmed during the visit that the competences necessary for qualified teaching are fulfilled. Both the students and the University

leadership are credibly striving to increase internationalization of the program through strategic recruitments. The experts positively acknowledge this growth vision as well as the clear description of the program aims and implementation.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

3.2 Structure of the study program

In accordance with ESG 1.3 Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The study program aims to provide students with specialized and interdisciplinary knowledge as well as professional, methodological and general competences. The study program has a modular structure that is closely linked to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)² and a course-related examination system. Descriptions of the modules contain all necessary information, as required in the ECTS User's Guide (particularly with regard to the details about learning content and outcomes, methods of learning, prerequisites for the allocation of ECTS credits, workload).

The combination and succession of the modules of the study program are consistent with the specified qualification objectives (described earlier).

It is assured that students receive the support and guidance they need for the organization and accomplishment of assignments and the learning process in general.

The arrangement of internships in the study program allows acquisition of ECTS credits. Provided that the program offers exchange mobility gaps, they will be integrated into students' curriculum.

Study programs with special profile requirements (e.g. dual, part-time, occupational or distance learning study programs) comply with particular aspects that are considered as appropriate and proportionate. These particular aspects are continuously observed in the study program.

² http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/ects-guide_en.pdf

Summary

The “Molecular Biology and Genetics” program comprises 32 core modules, 6 area electives, 3 university electives, and 2 free electives. There are between 5 and 6 modules in total provided for each semester. All modules have to be completed within one semester. Recent revisions to the MBGE curriculum have increased the percentage of elective lectures to 25% of the overall program while reducing local credits by 2 credits, with ECTS values remaining unchanged. For example, MATH101 and MATH102 have each had their tutorial hours reduced by 1, and several area elective courses have been recoded or reclassified (from area elective to free elective, or between different MBGE-coded courses) without changes to their credit values. In response to a directive from YÖK based on advancements in the Bologna Process, EU-EQF, and global higher education developments, these minimal adjustments have been made to modernize and align the curriculum with international standards. The credit reduction is balanced by an increase in self-study hours to ensure students continue to meet all educational requirements.

The list of modules offered:

Nr.	Title	Sem.	CH
BIOL101	General Biology	1	4
CHEM110	General Chemistry	1	4
MATH101	Calculus – I	1	3
CMPE101	Introduction to Computing	1	3
TREG/TUR K100	Turkish Language	1	0
ENGL141	Reading and Writing Skills – I	1	3
			17
MBGE102	Introduction to Molecular Biology and Genetics	2	4
CHEM104	Organic Chemistry	2	3
MATH102	Calculus – II	2	3
PHYS101	General Physics – I	2	4
ENGL142	Reading and Writing Skills – II	2	3
			17

MBGE201	Cell Biology	3	4
CHEM215	Biochemistry	3	4
PHYS102	General Physics – II	3	4
HIST100/TA RH100	History of Civilization	3	0
FREEXX1	Free Elective	3	3
			15
MBGE202	Genetics	4	4
MICB120	Microbiology	4	4
STAT110	Biostatistics	4	2
MBGE204	Ecology & Evolutionary Biology	4	3
FREEXX2	Free Elective	4	3
UNIEXX1	University Elective	4	3
			19
MBGE301	Human Genetics	5	3
MBGE303	Molecular Genetics	5	4
MBGE305	Bioinformatics	5	3
MBGEXX1	Area Elective	5	3
MBGE307	Physiology I	5	3
			16
MBGE308	Physiology II	6	3
MBGE302	Molecular Biology I	6	4
MBGE304	Molecular Biology Lab I	6	3
PHAR208	Immunology	6	2
MBGEXX2	Area Elective	6	3
			15
MBGE308	Molecular Biology II	7	4
MBGE302	Molecular Biology Lab II	7	3
MBGE304	Seminar	7	0
BIOE403	Genetic Engineering	7	4
UNIEXX2	University Elective	7	3

MBGEXX3	Area Elective	7	3
			17
MBGE402	Special Project	8	3
MBGEXX4	Area Elective	8	3
MBGEXX5	Area Elective	8	3
UNIEXX3	University Elective	8	3
MBGEXX6	Area Elective	8	3
			15
	Total:		131

The module description covers the following aspects: module number, level/semester, credit hours, language, learning outcomes/goals/skills, content of the module, examination methods (see Annex 1).

In the first year of the program, students build foundational knowledge, including language and communication skills through academic reading, writing, and comprehension. In the second year, the curriculum provides interdisciplinary learning through courses and electives, allowing the students to gain a deeper understanding of the field while learning statistical methods and data analysis. In the third year, students have the opportunity to take specialized elective courses in their area while gaining a comprehensive understanding of computational tools and methods for analyzing data. In the final year, students are prepared for independent research, professional careers, and further academic pursuits through advanced theoretical and practical molecular biology courses and specialized electives (SER 4.1.3).

The University explains that while participation in internships is not mandatory for MBGE students—since the program mainly involves lab work conducted on campus—CIU provides support for those who request a voluntary internship. In such cases, a dedicated career services office assists in identifying suitable opportunities through the university's established partnerships. MBGE faculty members review and approve internship placements to ensure alignment with the field of study and learning objectives. Students are encouraged to volunteer at research or medical laboratories, clinics, IVF centers, or foundations, as well as to participate in workshops, training programs and seminars to gain

educational experience (Annex 16). Furthermore, students who opt for a voluntary internship are assigned a faculty mentor who oversees the experience through regular check-ins and provides academic guidance. In addition, the University offers administrative and legal support, assisting with documentation, insurance coverage, and credit recognition if applicable. Although submitting internship reports is not required, students are encouraged to document their experiences.

According to the University, the program uses a variety of teaching methods including lectures, tutorials, laboratory and computer sessions, study groups, discussions, debates, and seminars. Teachers use electronic and media teaching aids such as PowerPoint presentations, videos, online databases, bioinformatics, structural biology, illustration, citation, and statistical analyses software. Finally, classrooms and laboratories are equipped with a computer connected to a projector and free wireless internet. In addition, the program provides advisory sessions during faculty office hours, giving students the opportunity to explore topics and address questions directly related to their assignments (SER 4.1.5).

According to the University, the classrooms are well equipped with boards, projectors, and desktop computers connected to the internet. Services via the student information system (SIS) allow students to register for courses, monitor academic progress, view and print transcripts/grades, view timetables, and check the availability of classrooms and other venues (SER 4.1.6).

During the first semesters, students of the program are already introduced to the basics of research and scientific methods. In MBGE102 "Introduction to Molecular Biology and Genetics," students receive 3 hours of theory and 2 hours of lab practice per week, learning basic molecular biology techniques such as analyzing mammalian cell types, chromosome spread preparation, sequencing the human microbiome, and performing DNA extraction. In MBGE201 "Cell Biology," the structure is similar—3 hours of theoretical instruction combined with 2 hours of lab practice—allowing students to acquire fundamental skills in cell examination under a light microscope, cell culturing, investigation of biological membranes, and gel electrophoresis. MBGE202 "Genetics" follows the same schedule and teaches basic genetic techniques, including pipette tests, RNA/DNA extraction, and GFP transformation, with advanced extensions such as colony PCR, DNA

fingerprinting using restriction enzymes, and exploring human origins through PCR amplification of mitochondrial DNA. The curriculum further progresses with MBGE304 "Molecular Biology Lab 1," where students spend 1 hour in theory and 4 hours in lab practice each week to gain advanced molecular biology skills; techniques covered include RNA/DNA extraction, electrophoresis, SNP analysis of the PTC gene using PCR, recombinant DNA construction and cloning, and Southern Blot-based DNA fingerprinting. In MBGE403 "Molecular Biology Lab 2," students again complete 1 hour of theory and 4 hours of laboratory work per week, learning advanced techniques such as protein extraction using the Bradford assay, applying CrisprCas9 for cystic fibrosis treatment, performing western blot analysis for Alzheimer's detection, conducting ELISA-based Alzheimer's research, and using affinity chromatography for glucose binding protein.

Then in the final semester, students must take the "Special Project" course (code: MBGE402) which is designed to teach students how to do independent and interdisciplinary research on a topic of interest. First, they must submit a project proposal which they use as a guide to write a review paper. Then, they investigate their hypotheses by carrying out literary and/or laboratory research. Through this process, students get to practice their scientific communication skills, public speaking, time management, content organization, and defending their work (SER 4.1.7).

The education language used in the program is English. In addition, the curriculum includes a module for acquiring Turkish language skills to support better integration into everyday life. Moreover, the program prepares the students to step into a diverse global workforce, while establishing a strong network with international researchers and medical professionals. Finally, the curriculum was updated during the Fall 2023-2024 to ensure the curriculum remains current with the latest scientific advancements (SER 4.1.8).

As the University states, Northern Cyprus faces substantial political and legal challenges that hinder its integration into international systems and restrict its participation in global agreements and treaties, which are vital for student mobility programs. However, academic staff and students from the Turkish Cypriot community who meet residency requirements and have at least one parent born in Cyprus are eligible for European mobility programs through EU funding. in

addition, the University accepts self-funded study mobility for all CIU students for up to 25% of their program duration, allowing them to participate in summer school visits or enroll in one to two semesters of courses at other universities, with the possibility of having these courses recognized in their CIU programs.

Judgment

The Bachelor study program “Molecular Biology and Genetics” has a course-based structure and a course-related examination system. The combination and succession of the courses of the study program are consistent with the specified qualification objectives (described earlier). It is assured that students receive the support and guidance they need for the organization and accomplishment of assignments and the learning process in general.

As the University explains, the MBGE program is growing—both in size and in scope—and the University has just introduced a complementary Master study program in Biotechnology. The experts note how the program actively partners with Pharmacy, Bioengineering and Biomedical Engineering departments, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration through shared courses and joint thesis supervision. The experts recommend strengthen the collaboration especially with the complementary Master study program Biotechnology by embedding more shared content e.g. through electives.

The experts appreciate that the Healthy Living Centre plays a multifaceted role in teaching and research. It supplies real-world public health data for students’ graduation projects and offers supervised patient treatment opportunities under an active ethics committee. Within the center, students can collect data during their voluntary internships and perform statistical analyses under faculty supervision. As the University explains, modern computational tools are now integrated into both the curriculum and the research agenda. The experts note that AI, machine learning, and deep learning to tasks such as disease classification and predictive modeling is applied. From the experts’ point of view, these approaches aim to complement traditional wet-lab molecular biology methods and underscore the program’s forward-looking orientation.

Overall, the MBGE program is committed to building research competences through interdisciplinary projects, AI applications, and international partnerships. Experts note that its strategic goal is to act as a catalyst for regional biotech

sector development, drawing inspiration from established European hubs. They also highlight a long-term ambition to integrate business and science education in order to foster entrepreneurship among graduates. While internships are not mandatory, the department leverages strong local networks to help students secure placements if they want to pursue a voluntary internship. According to experts, MBGE students benefit from a robust curriculum that blends theoretical and practical training, culminating in a graduation project designed to sharpen scientific writing, database literacy, and presentation skills—utilizing tools like BioRender and Mendeley and simulating real-world academic practice.

The University maintains mobility agreements with several international partners, including the University of Rome. Under its bylaws, students may transfer a specified percentage of their coursework to these partner institutions, with each transfer request reviewed individually by the head of the relevant department. The Vice Dean closely oversees all mobility activities to ensure compliance and quality. While the University actively encourages student participation in exchange programs, due to visa issues and financial considerations it is sometimes difficult for the students to take part in student exchange. As the University explains, the MBGE department proactively pursues both academic and industrial collaborations. Although local industrial capacity remains limited, the department leverages international networks to secure joint research projects, student internships, and shared resources. From the experts' point of view, the University should extent international collaborations to elevate research quality and expand opportunities for students and staff alike.

The experts acknowledge the very detailed course files with its content and aims, which allows a high level of transparency. In the experts' opinion, the structure of the curricula seems to make the workload manageable.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

3.3 Admission and Feasibility

In accordance with ESG 1.4 Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

The admission requirements and, if applied, student selection procedures are specified. They correspond to the standards of the study program.

Feasibility of the study program is guaranteed. The amount of student workload is appropriate.

Student support services, as well as specialized and general consultations, are provided by the University in a sufficient and appropriate manner.

As a whole, the organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program.

Summary

According to the University, admission to CIU undergraduate programs requires that students be graduates of a high school or an equivalent secondary school. To be admitted to the “Molecular Biology and Genetics” program, applicants can apply directly online via the Student Recruitment System (SRS). They must complete the application form correctly and upload the required documents. For students who are citizens of the Turkish Republic of Turkey, the required documents include a high school graduation diploma and to pass the exam organized by YÖK student section and placement center (ÖSYM) or to be placed in a program with the CIU special talent exam based on the score of ÖSYM. Citizens of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are placed according to the result of the exam organized within the framework of quotas. For international students, required documents include a completed application form, a higher/secondary certificate or equivalent (e.g., O/A’Level, WAEC/NECO), evidence of English language competence (either a TOEFL score of 65 IBT or an IELTS score of 5.5; otherwise, the CIU English proficiency exam is taken on campus), and a scanned copy of an international passport or birth certificate. The CIU student admission regulations are detailed in Annex A (SER 5.1.1).

The rules and regulations for disabled and chronic diseased students are available on the website of the University and in the Annex N (SER 5.1.2).

The rules about transfers from universities inside the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to the CIU are detailed in the “Student registration admission regulations” (Annex A). International students can also apply for transfer to a program within the framework of the rules determined by the senate. Courses completed successfully at other institutions are evaluated by the exemption commission of the faculty based on their credit value and subject matter, and course exemptions are granted accordingly (SER 5.1.3).

The student development and counselling center was established to support students in acquiring contemporary knowledge and skills, as well as to assist with their psychological, educational, and social development. According to the University, the center comprises offices for student affairs and social activities, along with a psychological counselling and guidance center. Its services include coordinating immigration procedures for postal and international students, promoting personal development and psychological well-being, and providing leisure, creative, and social activities that complement academic programs. In addition, faculty staff offer advisory support to MBGE students. Appointed advisors, following the regulations on student advisory services, introduce students to University and Faculty facilities, assist with course selection, help resolve personal issues, provide career guidance, and monitor student progress. The role of the advisor is to (SER 5.2.1):

- Provide face-to-face advising services to students during the registration period and sign the relevant documents,
- Provide professional guidance to students,
- Provide guidance to inform students about the University/Faculty/Department facilities,
- Monitor students' successes and attendances in courses,
- Investigate the reasons for failure,
- Follow the students' drop-out procedures and investigate the reasons,
- Enlighten the students about elective courses and help them in the selection,
- Provide guidance and direct students to the psychological counseling, guidance, and research center,
- Ensure the organization of forms submitted to the school administration,
- Inform the department head/program coordinator about problems,
- Confirm the "personal development report" prior to the mid-term and final exams by having direct meetings,
- Participate in the board of advisors meeting and inform the department head/program coordinator of problems and measures to be taken in the future,
- Inform students about the required obligations for graduation.

Most MBGE students receive scholarships that cover between 25% and 100% of tuition fees. Approximately 58% receive the international student's scholarship;

9% receive the ÖSYM Exam Scholarship; 7% receive the Top 3 or 5 Choices Scholarship; 6% receive the YKS Additional Placement Special Preference Scholarship; 5% receive the ÖYBSS Exam Scholarship; and about 1% receive one of the Athletic Scholarship, MEB Scholarship, or Diploma Grade Point Average Scholarship. Additionally, most of the African MBGE students receive scholarships from their home countries.

Judgment

The admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are properly documented and made publicly available. The experts determine the admission procedures and requirements to be appropriate, as they correspond to the standards of the study program.

The experts draw attention to the relatively high number of exams to be passed during the study program. The University states that the system of midterm and final exams is determined by the government. In order to prepare students for the level of difficulty and volume of exams, the type as well as the time of the different examinations is defined and communicated to the students transparently through the course syllabus at the beginning of each course. The experts confirm that the University takes good measures to guarantee the feasibility of the study program despite the high workload. The organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program. The experts appreciate the fact that students with disabilities or chronic illness are offered compensatory measures when writing exams, such as extra time or writing the exam in another room.

On site, it became obvious that the teaching staff follows an “open-door-policy”. In the first week of each year, students undergo an orientation which familiarizes them with available support services and where the colleges and departments are introduced.

As another support mechanism, an academic advisor is responsible for a group of students from the beginning of each semester. Students are supported through advisors, course coordinators or personal tutors with their registration process, selecting a study program, financial and personal issues and their performance during the semester. Self-study hours are formally evaluated, and continuous assessment methods—such as quizzes, assignments, and in-course

activities—guide students throughout each semester. Academic advisors review each student's GPA every term and provide targeted support when needed.

If the students have problems besides academic issue, a social support unit is installed at the University. The experts find the support services at the University to be exemplary and conducive to the health and success of the student body. On-site, students report that prospective students are drawn to CIU by generous scholarship opportunities (with many receiving awards covering up to 100% of fees and flexible payment options) as well as a culturally diverse campus, which the experts positively acknowledge.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

3.4 Examination system and transparency

In accordance with ESG 1.8 Public Information

Examinations serve to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved. These examinations are focused on students' knowledge and competences. The requirements to students' performance in examinations are regulated and published. The frequency of examinations, as well as their organization, is appropriate.

The University guarantees that students with disabilities or chronic illnesses receive compensation with regard to time limits and formal requirements of the study process, as well as all final and course-related performance records.

Information concerning the study program, process of education, admission requirements and the compensation regulations for students with disabilities are documented and published.

Summary

The assessment measures are designed to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods and ensure that the intended program outcomes are achieved. At the beginning of each semester, instructors plan a range of assessment strategies—including quizzes, exams, projects, presentations, and homework—that align with each course's learning objectives and overall program outcomes. Laboratory courses have their own evaluation system including laboratory quizzes,

reports, or evaluations. Each course syllabus clearly details these objectives and the corresponding assessment percentages using the CIU-SIS and moodle systems. Each semester typically features one midterm exam (in the 7th or 8th week) and one final exam (in the 15th or 16th week), with a minimum attendance requirement of 70% for theoretical courses and at least 80% for practical courses. Students can appeal exam evaluations within three workdays, and those unable to take an exam for acceptable reasons (such as health issues) may register for a make-up exam, while students who fail or miss the final exam must take a resit (SER 6.1.1).

All documents related to the study plan, educational process, admission requirements, and examination regulations are published on the CIU website and are accessible to all students and staff via moodle. Measurement and evaluation scales for courses in the Molecular Biology and Genetics program are announced along with the course syllabus via the moodle system at the beginning of each academic semester. Instructors define and publish the assessment tool percentages using the student information system (SIS system), ensuring that every student has access to this information. Students with disabilities apply to the dean's office with a request letter and a doctor/hospital report detailing their disabilities. The University has established the "Regulation on education, training, and examination practices for students with disabilities" that aims at facilitating the living conditions of disabled student. Finally, training and cultural activities as well as environmental arrangements (transport, cafeteria, library, and parking lots) have been made to provide a better campus life quality and efficient education (SER 6.2.1).

Information about activities, especially the programs offered, is made easily accessible to students, graduates, and the public through the University website. There, the students can find all the details about curricula, course offerings, faculty information, admission requirements, as well as news and updates. During their study time, students can access all the information and materials needed on the portals SIS and moodle. Besides that, the University has active accounts on social media platforms which provide regular updates about programs, events, and achievements. Finally, the academic advisors provide personalized guidance on the program selection, course registration, and career planning, while various student organizations, groups or clubs share the information concerning activities (SER 6.2.2).

Judgment

The University uses a continuous assessment process to ensure the quality of education for its students. The study program has a course-related examination system. Its implementation, including the grading system, course load regulations, repetition of courses and exams is regulated and transparent for the students. From the experts' point of view, the examination serves to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved. These examinations are focused on students' knowledge and competences. Nevertheless, in the experts' opinion, the study program includes a very high number of exams which causes a high workload not only for students but also for the teaching staff. The transparent information of examination methods and of the examination schedule at the beginning of each term makes the high number of assessments during and at the end of each semester manageable. An examination can be repeated once. Students who cannot attend the test due to health issues or other unforeseen circumstances are allowed to take the test on another agreed day. If the examination is failed twice, students must redo the course in the following semester. Thus, the experts conclude that the examinations, although numerous, serve to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved or not and are focused on students' knowledge.

The requirements to students' performance in examinations are regulated and published in the course syllabus. The frequency of examinations, as well as their organizations, is appropriate. The University guarantees that students with disabilities or chronic illnesses receive compensation regarding time limits and formal requirements of the study process, as well as all final and course-related performance records.

From the experts' point of view, the relevant information concerning the study program, the process of education, the admission requirements and compensation regulations are documented and published. A Diploma Supplement, developed by the Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO, is provided in addition to the graduation certificate.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

3.5 Teaching staff and material equipment

In accordance with ESG 1.5 Teaching Staff and in line with ESG 1.6 Learning Resources and student support

Professionalism and a sufficient number of human resources assure the successful implementation of the study program. Qualifications of the teaching personnel correspond to the requirements of the study program. Recruitment and appointment of teaching positions are appropriate. Interdisciplinary links to other study programs are taken into consideration.

Measures for the professional and personal development of the teaching personnel are provided.

Qualitative and quantitative sufficiency of the equipment and space resources assures the successful implementation of the study program.

Summary

The teaching load within the “Molecular Biology and Genetics” program was divided between 9 full-time staffs for the academic year 2023/2024 (1 professor, 1 associate professor, 3 assistant professors, and 4 assistants). Besides that, 15 instructors from other departments/faculties lecture courses withing the curriculum. Finally, there are 4 part-time staff affiliated to the program. The student/teacher ratio is 9.5. The percentage of the study program to be accredited that is taught by full-time professors, lecturers, and other teaching staff is as shown in the following table:

Full time teaching staff	2023-2024
Professor	10.3%
Associate Professor	13.7%
Assistant Professor	48.3%
Doctors	0%
Senior instructor	10.3%
Total	82.6%

In addition, two new full-time lecturers who hold PhD degrees (Dr.) are recruited to the MBGE Program at the beginning of 2024-2025 academic year. Full-time lecturers are responsible for teaching, student advising, and performing

administrative and academic tasks assigned by the rectorate and dean's office. Weekly teaching loads vary by academic title, ranging from 12 hours for professors to 25 hours for research assistants. Lecturers holding administrative roles such as faculty dean, coordinator, or head of department receive a teaching load reduction of 6, 3, and 3 credits respectively (SER 7.1.1).

The teaching staff is selected according to the "CIU academic staff employment regulations" published on the University page (Annex C). First, a report is written to the rectorate by the faculties with the number of teaching staff needed and their required qualifications. After confirmation by the rectorate and the board of trustees, announcements are made on the University page, as well as on the social media platforms. After a first evaluation of the applications, interviews are achieved by a committee comprised of the CIU general secretary, one staff from human resources, the dean, and the vice dean (SER 7.1.2).

The Faculty of Arts of Sciences implements comprehensive measures for human resource development and enhancing teaching qualifications. According to the University, regular professional development programs focus on the latest legal practices, research methodologies, and effective teaching strategies, providing opportunities for continuing education in university didactics. Courses cover interactive teaching techniques, innovative assessment methods, and the integration of technological tools to create an engaging learning environment. Cross-disciplinary collaborations are encouraged, allowing faculty to incorporate diverse perspectives into their curriculum. A structured mentorship and peer review system supports junior faculty through guidance from experienced academics and constructive feedback from colleagues. Faculty research and scholarships are actively supported through funding opportunities and research grants, which help faculty present at conferences and publish their work. Additionally, technological training workshops ensure proficiency in legal research tools and online teaching platforms. Ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms, including student feedback and self-assessment, are used to update development plans and maintain high teaching standards (SER 7.1.3).

As the University explains, three faculty coordinators are responsible for coordinating lecture programs and exam schedules across all departments. Additionally, four research assistants are available to support lecturers as needed. Before each academic year, the head of department creates workload schedules and submits a needs analysis report to the rectorate via the dean of faculty. Based on

the analysis, vacancy announcements are issued, and the necessary personnel needs are met through evaluations within human resources (SER 7.2.1).

According to the University, the modernization of classrooms and laboratories is one of the main priorities. The “Molecular Biology and Genetics” (MBGE) program as part of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is located in the Haspolat region of Nicosia. Educational activities take place in the Science and Technology Building since 2017. There are laboratories on the basement of the building while classrooms are on the first and second floors and offices are also on the second floor. In addition, there is a specific MBGE laboratory available on the basement. The following table gives a list of the classrooms and laboratories:

Capacity (students)	Classroom	Computer Lab	Other Labs	Workshop	Studio	Total area (m ²)
0-25	1	-	2	-	-	146.4
26-50	5	5	8	-	-	1776.4
51-75	10	-	-	-	-	1016.6
76-100	7	-	-	-	-	900.6
101-150	2	-	-	-	-	464.5
Total	25	5	10	-	-	4304.5

According to the University, the MBGE labs are equipped with modern scientific instruments that support advanced research and practical training. These facilities include PCR machines, centrifuges, gel electrophoresis apparatus, incubators, autoclaves, PH meters, real-time PCR systems, biosafety cabinets class i and ii, fume hoods, pipettes, a liquid nitrogen container, fridges, freezers (including – 80°C freezers), a cold room, light microscopes, and a scanning electron microscope (SEM). In addition, specialized equipment such as HPLC chromatography and flow cytometry is available in other labs in the building if needed.

Besides educational infrastructure, offices, a kitchen and a meeting room are located in the eastern part of the second floor of the building. The following table shows the details of the available infrastructure (SER 7.3.1):

Type	Number	Area (m ²)
Academic offices	4	112.6
Administrative office	1	28.1
Dean's office	1	28.1
Faculty secretary	1	28.3
Department secretary	1	28.1
Assistants' room	1	61
Kitchen	1	28
WC	2 (F/M)	20
Total	11	306.1

The CIU central library offers students and academics a diverse collection of resources, including books, journals, newspapers, e-books, e-journals, audio cassettes, CD-DVDs, video cassettes, floppy disks, and academic internet resources. The collection covers subjects such as philosophy, engineering, architecture, business-economics, law, literature, social sciences, language, geography, history, international relations, consulting resources, social and general subjects. It holds a total of 61,548 resources in key fields like general culture, philosophy and psychology, religion, social sciences, language, natural sciences and mathematics, applied sciences and technology, art, literature and rhetoric, geography, history, and auxiliary disciplines. The library has printed copies of 838 books and 684848 e-books related to MBGE education. Five specific databases (BMJ online journals, SpringerNature-Nature, and -Academic Journals, MEDLINE, and Ovide Total Access Collection) are available in the library.

Library facilities are accessible to both the public and University members according to the "CIU library regulations" (annex R). The library is open from 08:00 to 24:00 on working days and from 08:00 to 20:00 on weekends. Requests for books, periodicals, and databases are collected by the dean's office, submitted to the rectorate for approval, and then processed by the library staff. The University library has been operating in the "information centre" building since 1997 and offers both wired and wireless internet access. Its aim is to provide the resources needed by students, academic, and administrative staff for their educational and research activities. An electronic catalogue browsing system is available online, allowing users to search for resources, check circulation information, and reserve items. An orientation program is held at the beginning of each academic year to introduce new students to library services. To borrow materials, students must have a student id card; master's and doctoral students may

borrow up to 5 books for 15 days, while associate and undergraduate students may borrow up to 3 books for the same period. Publications not available in the CIU library are obtained through interlibrary loan arrangements with other university libraries and electronic databases are accessible via the library web page (SER 7.3.2).

Each classroom is equipped with computers, a smart board, and a projector and a free wi-fi connection is available on campus for all staff and students (SER 7.3.3).

The CIU is a private university operating under “New Island Education Ltd”. All expenditure of the University and specifically the MBGE program are performed by the accounting directorate under the control of the rector and the board of trustees. The University provides scholarships for students as an incentive for success and offers a range of scholarships between 50% and 100% scholarships, or discounted tuition fees. CIU provides increasing support for both students and academic staff by ensuring access to research laboratories, equipment, and consumable expenses. The University also promotes academic progress by supporting faculty research, participation in conferences, and by awarding scientific publications. Each academic year, the center meets with administrative and academic units to organize training based on identified staff development needs. Finally, annual fees for international membership of the MBGE program are paid by the accounting directorate of the University. Moreover, participation expenses of student representatives are paid for EPSA and TWINNET meetings held each year in various European cities (SER 7.3.4).

Judgment

New teaching staff is thoroughly briefed about the program and their teaching responsibilities before they start teaching. Overall, the teaching and academic staff at the Cyprus International University shows a very high level of commitment and potential for the execution as well as further development of the study program they are responsible for. The experts conclude that there is a strong corporate identity and positive group dynamics among the University and the faculty administration. As motivations to teach at the CIU, the faculty cites transparent and accessible working regulations, a vibrant campus life, the solid reputation of their academic colleagues, and a loyal, family-like community that continues to support graduates well beyond their time on campus.

The experts find the amount of human resources allocated to the study program to be sufficient to carry out its functions. The teaching staff is well qualified and in possession of academic and technical credentials and experience adequate to their tasks. The University informs its employees about opportunities for personal and professional development transparently, and actively encourages their participation in workshops, training courses and conferences intended to improve their abilities, which is confirmed during the talks with the staff on site. The Centre for Excellence in Education and Training, overseen by the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and led by the Dean of the Faculty of Education, brings together members from across all disciplines to support teaching and learning. It receives regular feedback from the University's quality committees, reviews student evaluations, and organizes seminars and workshops in response—covering topics from time management and learning strategies for students to research-capability training for academic staff. Participation is voluntary, but the Centre actively works to engage all faculty members. As the University explains, the Centre for Excellence in Education and Training has begun digitizing its professional-development offerings to broaden faculty participation. In addition to traditional in-person seminars, the Centre now delivers key workshops—on topics such as assessment design, teaching with technology, and research methods—via online platforms. This hybrid approach ensures that all staff, regardless of campus or schedule constraints, can engage in continuous learning.

As the University states, the teaching staff of the “Molecular Biology and Genetics” program roughly publishes one peer-reviewed paper each year, though they anticipate output will climb as staff numbers rise and facilities improve. Since the MBGE program at CIU is still relatively young and currently lacks a clearly defined research group—with teaching staff primarily engaged in diverse, individual fields of interest—a centralized research focus has yet to emerge, embracing more publications. They point out that tight schedules and constrained budgets limit research progress, yet faculty members remain driven by award incentives—especially when their work appears in indexed outlets such as Scopus and Web of Science. The experts also highlight that the University steps in to offer researchers greater scheduling flexibility whenever they secure external grants, reinforcing a campus culture that prizes sustained academic achievement.

Each department at CIU meets the Higher Education Council's minimum KPIs for teaching staff. Annual needs assessments determine new hires, with applications

handled online. Faculty benefit from transparent working conditions, research incentives, and competitive salaries, making CIU an attractive employer. Class sizes are capped at 30–40 students for theoretical courses and 15–20 for laboratories, ensuring effective delivery and supervision. As the experts note, currently, three staff members often share a single office, which limits confidential mentoring and individual study. Allocating private workspaces for each faculty member and protecting blocks of research time would better support scholarly output and enhance the department's research profile.

To teach in the English-medium program, staff must pass an English proficiency exam offered three times yearly. All staff and students have access to extensive online resources, including PubMed and ResearchGate.

The experts visited the premises of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, where the skills labs of the study program “Molecular Biology and Genetics” are located. The skills labs are equipped with all relevant equipment and training resources. From the experts' point of view, the quality of the modern laboratories used to train students in the program are sufficient.

As a whole, it was ascertained by the experts that the Bachelor study program “Molecular Biology and Genetics” has ample teaching facilities at its disposals.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

3.6 Quality assurance

In accordance with ESG 1.1. Policy for Quality Assurance and ESG 1.10 Cyclical External Quality Assurance.

In line with ESG 1.7 Information Management and taking into consideration ESG 1.9 On-going Monitoring and periodic review of programs

The University has developed and documented a concept of quality assurance in education process, teaching and research, which serves as the basis for the quality-oriented development and implementation of the study program.

The results of the internal quality assurance management are applied for the continuous development of the study program. In doing so, the University takes into

close consideration the quality evaluation results as well as the analyses of students' workload, their academic accomplishments and feedback from graduates.

Summary

The CIU quality commission, chaired by the rector, includes the general secretary, student affairs director, information technology manager, academic evaluation and advisory commission president, international office manager, five senate-appointed members, and two student representatives (one being an international student). This commission works through its quality committee to directly collaborate with academic and administrative units using PDCA cycles. Each faculty and school have its own academic unit quality commission, which monitors and reports on evaluations at the program level. These reports are reviewed by quality committee auditors, who then provide recommendations. All academic and administrative units are required to adhere to this structured quality assurance system as defined by the CIU quality commission. According to the University, the department accreditation and quality committee conducts annual surveys to collect feedback from students, graduates, employers, and supervisors.

The University's quality mission is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed for career success and societal contribution. This is achieved through a student-centered approach that emphasizes interdisciplinary learning, the use of advanced technology, and independent study. The University aims to support continuous improvement and collaboration, ensuring that both students and staff benefit from a progressive and inclusive learning environment (SER 8.1).

The MBGE program quality assurance is based on the "Regulations for academic assessment and quality improvement" (Annex J) which state the basic principles for evaluation and quality improvement of education, research, and administration, as well as for external quality assessments. At the end of each academic year, the University surveys both academic and administrative staff regarding the quality of education, research activities, and student services. The survey results are shared with all faculties, and the Board of Trustees takes appropriate steps based on this feedback. The University emphasizes that its quality assurance system is implemented through the collective involvement of both instructors and students. Moreover, the quality of the program is overseen by a

committee composed of faculty members, department heads, program coordinators, and sometimes student representatives. This committee regularly reviews and assesses the program's performance and ensures its compliance with internal benchmarks. Through regular meetings the committee identifies strengths and weaknesses and shares the findings with the department board and the departmental leadership. The platforms moodle and SIS are used to monitor and enhance course delivery. Finally, action plans are developed and implemented according to the findings, including curricula revisions, upgrades of the facilities or enhancing faculty development programs (SER 8.1.1).

CIU follows an "open-door policy", therefore ensuring the active involvement of students who can refer to any faculty or administration member in order to express comments and complaints. Moreover, at the end of each semester, the students have to fill out an evaluation form which is available on the online student portal. CIU claims that the quality assurance and assessment system is realized by involving all instructors and students collectively. Finally, the evaluation process of the teaching staff takes into account the individual level of expertise, potential in scientific research, teaching skills and abilities, professional prestige achieved, and international recognition (SER 8.1.2).

The CIU legislation determines the policies for education and teaching. The University claims to be valuing student evaluations about lecturers and courses. Therefore, student evaluation questionnaires are administered online via the CIU-SIS system at the end of each academic semester. These evaluations are then reviewed by the academic staff in order to meet the necessary decisions (SER 8.1.3).

The evaluation of the MBGE program is based on the feedback from faculty members, students, graduates, and other stakeholders, as well as on the students' exam successes and on the internal evaluation reports of the program. In some cases, other indicators can also be taken into consideration. The evaluation results are systematically shared with the department and faculty management, academic staff, students and other stakeholders. After that, meetings are held at the beginning of each semester to discuss potential improvements. Besides that, students' feedback is communicated to the vice rector in charge of student affairs, and the dean's office continues to work on improvements based on collective petitions and requests from students (SER 8.1.4).

The following formulation is used to calculate students' course load and their place in the academic program according to their credit amount:

Calculation of Registration,

Course Load = Course Load [Semester of (Earned Credit + Credit of (Current Semester
+ if (Earned Credit > 0, 1, 0) - Failed Credit)]

As a result of these calculations, students' advisors check their course selections according to the table below and provide the necessary counseling information at the beginning of each semester (SER 8.1.5):

Semester	Credit	Cumulative Credit	Course Load
1	25	25	9
2	21	46	8
3	21	67	8
4	22	89	7
5	18	107	6
6	19	126	7
7	16	142	6
8	20	162	8

The following table shows the statistics of the MBGE program (SER 8.1.6):

Year	No. of Female Stds.	No. of Male Stds.	Total Stds.	Female Stds. in %	Male Stds. in %
2017-2018	0	6	6	0.000	100.000
2018-2019	5	4	9	55.556	44.444
2019-2020	8	11	19	42.105	57.895
2020-2021	17	19	36	47.222	52.778
2021-2022	18	19	37	48.649	51.351
2022-2023	8	13	21	38.095	61.905
2023-2024	30	14	44	68.182	31.818

Judgment

From the experts' point of view, the University has a well-structured quality assurance system that spans all units and underpins the development and implementation of the "Molecular Biology and Genetics" program. A documented concept for quality assurance in education, teaching, and research serves as the foundation for regular, systematic reviews, conducted in accordance with a PDCA cycle. These reviews examine program content against the latest disciplinary research, assess student workload, progression, and completion rates, evaluate assessment procedures, and collect anonymous feedback on expectations, needs, and satisfaction with courses and support services.

The University employs a robust data collection system that captures key performance indicators—such as progression, success, and dropout rates—alongside tracer studies conducted by an alumni office in cooperation with academic units. Student satisfaction surveys, integrated into the Student Information System and timed between mid-terms and finals, achieve high response rates despite voluntary participation. Each department appoints student representatives who work alongside faculty and external stakeholders on various committees to ensure that all perspectives are considered in the decision-making process. A dedicated questionnaire committee follows up on every survey, and evaluation results are discussed within academic teams.

Evidence-based action plans then guide targeted improvements, from adjustments to laboratory facilities and teaching assistant support to revised exam schedules as well as curriculum updates (including AI courses). Mandatory evaluations within the SIS drive these changes, and any actions taken are communicated to stakeholders through published program specifications. This comprehensive, transparent process demonstrates the University's commitment to continuous program enhancement and a supportive learning environment.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

3.7 Gender equality and equal opportunities

The University's actions on the provision of gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities for students with particular living circumstances are implemented in a transparent manner.

Summary

CIU supports the gender equality rights for administrative, academic, technical, and general staff and students. The University has a "women and gender studies research center" which aims at conducting and supporting research on gender studies and issues. Students under special conditions are free to inform the "student development and counseling center" either in person or through e-mail messages. Moreover, a strong coordination of the offices is maintained

continuously, and specified centers and staff are involved in addressing problems presented by the students (SER 9.1.1).

The coordination and management of academic and personal problems of students is assured by the CIU “student development and counseling center”. It is responsible for determining and meeting academic, technical, administrative, accommodation, and social needs of students with disabilities. The goal is to ensure that the disabled students are educated on equal terms with the other students and that the necessary measures are taken. All activities from the center are supervised by the University rector. Moreover, the University administration is responsible for structuring the buildings on campus in the most suitable way for disabled students. Technical assistance is offered in case of demands or complaints. Finally, the University offers counseling and training opportunities including psychological assistance (SER 9.1.2).

Additionally, CIU implements robust support systems for students with special needs. The student development and counseling center works closely with academic and administrative units to provide tailored accommodations—for example, accessible classrooms, exam arrangements with dedicated invigilators, and alternative formats for course materials—to ensure that students with disabilities or chronic illnesses can fully participate in their studies. CIU’s policy, as outlined in its regulation on education, training and examination practices for students with disabilities, aims to create a barrier-free campus and offers financial or social support when necessary (SER 9.1.3).

Judgment

The University demonstrates its commitment to the provision of equal opportunities for all students and shows openness for diversity and social development. Overall, the experts conclude that the University’s actions on the provision of gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities for students with particular living circumstances are implemented in a transparent manner. As the University explains, it includes a female empowerment center that provides mentoring, leadership workshops, and career-development resources. Approximately 65 percent of the program’s deans are women, reflecting significant female representation in leadership roles. Student committee membership is evenly divided between genders, and feedback during on-site indicates that female students feel both supported and secure within the programs.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

4 Conclusion

Based on the information from written documents and the results of the site visit, the experts came to the conclusion that the study program “Molecular Biology and Genetics” offered at the Cyprus International University fulfills the above-described criteria. Hence, the experts recommended that the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS make a positive decision regarding the accreditation of the study program.

The program aims are clearly defined and consistently implemented. Efforts toward internationalization were presented credibly and are viewed positively by the expert group. The structure of the study programs is of high quality, as confirmed by the students. Electives could further integrate interdisciplinary topics relevant across programs. The admission process is transparent and meets required standards. Students confirmed the workload is appropriate and manageable.

The examination system is transparent and appropriately focused on student knowledge and competencies. Faculty and equipment were assessed positively overall. Students appreciate the accessible support from teaching staff. A quality assurance system is in place and regularly applied. Student feedback is collected, results are communicated, and improvements are made accordingly. Supervision during practical phases is ensured. Policies on gender equality and equal opportunities are well implemented across the campus.

For the continuous development of the study program, the experts have outlined the following recommendations:

- The University should strengthen the collaboration especially with the complementary Master study program Biotechnology by embedding more shared content.
- The University should extent international collaborations to elevate research quality and expand opportunities for students and staff alike.

- The University should allocate private workspaces for each faculty member and protect blocks of research as this would better support scholarly output and enhance the department's research profile.
- A centralized research focus could be emerged, embracing more publications.

5 Decision of the Accreditation Commission

Decision of the Accreditation Commission July 22, 2025

This resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the site visit covered in the Assessment Report.

The site visit of the University took place on May 07-08, 2025, according to the previously agreed-upon schedule.

The accreditation procedure is structured according to the Accreditation Criteria developed by the AHPGS. The Accreditation Criteria are developed by the AHPGS in close accordance with the existing criteria and requirements valid in the Federal Republic of Germany and based on the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS discussed the procedural documents and the vote of the expert group regarding the Assessment Report.

The Bachelor study program requires the obtainment of 131 credit hours according to the internal credit hour system. The regulated study period in the program "Molecular Biology and Genetics" is four years (eight semesters). The study program comprises 43 modules, out of which 32 core modules, 6 area electives, 3 university electives, and 2 free electives. The language of instruction is English. The Bachelor study program "Molecular Biology and Genetics" is completed with awarding of the academic degree "Bachelor of Science". Admission takes place every fall and spring semester. The first cohort of students was admitted to the study program in the academic year 2016/2017.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS considers that all Accreditation Criteria are fulfilled and adopts the following decision:

The Bachelor study program "Molecular Biology and Genetics" is accredited for the duration of five years until September 30, 2030.

For further development and enhancement of the study program, as well as of the University as a whole, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS supports the recommendation articulated in the Assessment Report.

An appeal against this decision may be filed within two weeks of its notification. The appeal must be submitted in writing or recorded at the office of AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH, Sedanstraße 22, 79098 Freiburg, and must include a statement of reasons.