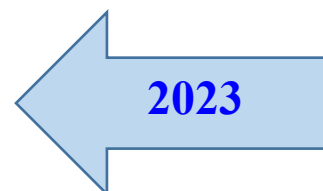
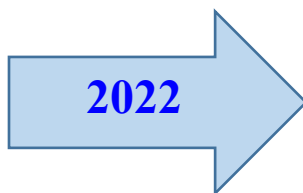


DISTANCE EDUCATION UNIT

**DISTANCE LEARNING
STUDENTS' GUIDE**



Nicosia, Cyprus

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Bridging the Technological Gap

The specific e-learning platform we use at Cosmos Open University is designed to enable you to achieve outstanding, well-founded learning outcomes.

The capabilities of the platform for modern and asynchronous Distance Education allow you to easily get acquainted with its use and choose the way that suits you best in order to develop a flexible and personalized learning process.

Face-to-face Education

Cosmos Open University, in addition to the online lessons, which are recorded and available to you at all times, has upgraded our internet connection to such an extent that Distance Learning Programmes are provided on an ongoing basis, seamlessly and efficiently.

Consequently, time, professional constraints, and even geography, do not constitute an obstacle in your communication with Professors nor with your fellow students. At the same time, you are given the opportunity to enjoy the multiple positive benefits from the participation of your fellow students in online lessons, most of whom come from various regions of other countries.

Online Resources

1. Online resources include available educational materials, web links, online communication and multimedia.
2. At the same time, the tools of the platform, in combination with the applied educational methodology, facilitate you and your teachers to interact with the various forms of educational material and to participate in learning through the diffusion of knowledge.
3. It is therefore clear that this multifactorial environment provides the most favourable conditions for flexible and personalized learning, which combines the advantages of modern and asynchronous Distance Learning.

It goes without saying that in order to implement the above and achieve the educational goals, it is necessary -

- To allocate a good amount of time for studying,
- To properly plan around other responsibilities (e.g. family, business, social, etc.) and
- To exercise self-discipline.

It is crucial to:

- devote time to study the weekly curriculum,
- comply with deadlines for submission of written assignments or other related activities and
- participate in online lessons and discussions.

DISTANCE LEARNING EDUCATION UNIT

Operating Framework

- ✓ **Support**
- ✓ **Encouragement**
- ✓ **Careful Listening**
- ✓ **Acceptance**
- ✓ **Trust**
- ✓ **Respect**
- ✓ **Problem Solving**

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Curriculum Structure

Cosmos Open University Curricula are structured on the basis of semester courses. Each course covers a specific subject at undergraduate and Postgraduate level. The courses are offered either in the autumn semester educational period (October - January) or in the spring semester educational period (February - June).

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

With the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) academic credits are granted, secured and credited and can be transferred (from one education system to another).

The purpose of this system is to facilitate the application of academic recognition procedures between European academic institutions. Its real power is based on the transparency of learning outcomes and workloads, which are documented with ECTS credits (each unit includes an estimated 25-30 hours of workload).

If you would like more information, please visit the European Commission website:

https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_el
https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_el

Electronic Educational Platform

The University Platform is a complete and constantly evolving E-Learning System which supports, in every way, the educational process.

Specifically, Cosmos Open University has created an online learning platform, using the **Moodle** system and **Big Blue Button** (BBB) platform.

Moodle is an open source Learning Management System that gives every teacher the opportunity to create an e-learning environment, and BBB simulates a virtual classroom in which the Lecturer conducts a class.

Professor/Counsellor

The Professor/Counsellor who teaches, guides, and supports students on their path to knowledge is a key functional member of our well-trained Teaching Staff.

The Professor/Counsellor is a member of the Teaching Research Staff of our University or other educational organizations and performs educational and research work.

Group Counselling Meetings

These meetings are held periodically between the Professor Counsellor and students electronically, through the University's Distance Learning Platform and are part of the educational methodology.

COMMENCEMENT OF STUDIES

1. At Cosmos Open University, admission of students to our Programmes is based on the schedules set out in the Academic Calendar.

[The application for registration is submitted electronically at:
<http://www.Cosmos.ac.cy>]

2. The commencement of studies takes place twice a year before the beginning of the autumn semester educational period and before the beginning of the spring semester educational period.

3. Before the commencement of your studies, an information package is sent which, among other things, includes the following:

- general information about the Distance methodology
- technical information on the use of the e-learning platform
- contact details for the University and its staff
- relevant guides for using the e-learning platform and accessing the library

- the date of the Introductory Lesson.

[The newsletter is sent to both your personal e-mail and the University e-mail provided to you by Cosmos Open University].

4. (a) Then, on the specified date, the first Introductory Lesson takes place, which is also your first contact with the e-learning platform.

(b) The first lesson is a practical demonstration of the instructions for accessing the e-learning platform and at the same time, clarifying any questions.

5. (a) The individual conditions for enrolling students in the Programmes are mentioned in detail in the relevant Study Guide of each Programme.

(b) A general condition for enrolment in Postgraduate Programmes is that the candidate must hold a first degree from a recognized institution of higher education in Cyprus or abroad.

DURATION OF STUDIES

1. The duration of the Undereducated Programmes is 4 years (eight semesters) and the duration of Postgraduate Programmes is 18 months (three semesters).
2. The total educational load of each Undergraduate Programmes is 240 ECTS and of Postgraduate Programmes is ninety (90 ECTS) European credits.

3. Each student is entitled to enrol in as many courses as necessary to gain the total number of required credits, so long as the combined courses in question do not exceed thirty (30) credits each academic semester, and sixty (60) credits maximum per academic year.

(In the section "CLARIFICATION OF TERMS" more relevant information is provided)

COMMENCEMENT OF COURSES

1. The students of each course are divided into groups and each group has a Professor/Counsellor (More relevant information is provided in the section Professor/Counsellor).
2. You, as student have access to the e-learning platform only for the courses for which they have enrolled, in the specified educational teaching period.
3. Access to the platform is achieved using the password sent by the Distance Education Unit. [Instructions for accessing the platform are contained in the user guide, which is an appendix to this Guide].

4. On the last weekend of September, an introductory teleconference takes place between all the students of each group and the Professor/Counsellor.
5. Before the first teleconference (or the face-to-face meeting), the Professor/Counsellor sends to you, as member of the group, an introductory e-mail through which they introduce himself, quoting, among other things, relevant information about the course, the educational material, and at the same time, announcing the date and time of the first online lesson.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

1. The performance of each one of you in each course is evaluated by the preparation of at least one assignment and by the obligatory participation in a final written exam, in which the physical presence of the student is required.
2. The evaluation of the written examination constitutes 60% of the final grade and the remaining percentage is supplemented by the grade of the written assignments (20%) and of the activities, quizzes and exercises (20%).

However, in order to succeed in any course, you must pass the written examination with no less than 50/100. That is, in order to pass the full course, on the one hand success in the final exam (at least 50/100) and

on the other hand, submission and success of the written assignments (at least 50/100) is required

3. The written examinations take place at the end of each educational period and resit examinations take place in the first week of September. Exact written exam dates are set at the beginning of the academic year.
4. Your participation in the exams of each period (semester) is mandatory and in case you-
 - (i) do not attend the examination for reasons beyond of your control or due to force majeure (relevant documentation is required in such cases) then you attend a resit, which is considered as the first examination, and in this case, the grade of the relevant written assignments is added, if the other relevant conditions are met,
 - (ii) fail any examination, then take a resit which is evaluated from zero to one hundred and is registered as a maximum success score of 64/100:

It is pointed out that in this case the result of the written assignments of the previous educational period is not added,

(iii) fail in the final and re-examinations, then you may re-enrol in the course, paying only half of the cost, and in relation to the specific course, you have the same academic obligations as the other students, i.e. participation in the examinations, preparing written assignments as well as any other related obligations.

ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATES

1. Upon successful completion of the studies, based on the academic requirements of each Curriculum, the relevant Title is awarded.
2. In the Title of Studies are stated your name and surname, as you are registered in the relevant Register of the University and the appropriate grade: "EXCELLENT" or "VERY GOOD" or "GOOD".
3. At the same time, a transcript of records is issued, which includes, among others, the School, the Curriculum and the Diploma.
4. If you wish it is also possible to issue a Diploma Supplement.
5. Degrees are issued twice a year, in February and September, while a Graduation Ceremony is held, once a year, around the end of September.
6. Relevant certificates or other documents are issued by the University after the fulfilment of any outstanding financial or other obligations of the student to the University

EDUCATION AND RIGHTS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

1. The Cosmos Open University, adopting the aims and aspirations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2006 and the relevant Cypriot sanctioning legislation (Law No. 8 (III) 2011) manages particular sensitivity to the relevant needs of students.
2. Within the framework of this practice, the necessary infrastructure, support and the creation of conditions are provided to enable and facilitate these students.

STUDENT COMMUNICATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY

1. The communication of its Teaching and Administrative Staff of Cosmos Open University is carried out mainly by electronic means (e-mail, e-learning platform, etc.).
2. Until the completion of your registration in the Curriculum, the communication is made via your personal e-mail address. The University sends the initial relevant information to this address.

3. After completing your enrolment in the Curriculum, the University creates an e-mail address, which has the following form - your first and last name (in Latin characters) and after "@cosmos.ac.cy", (For example: a.pavlakis@Cosmos.ac.cy)
4. Thereafter, communication takes place ONLY through the e-mail address provided by the University. Otherwise, there is a possibility that your messages could be rejected as spam.
5. In this way, with the use of the university e-mail, your name of automatically communicated to the recipient and at the same time, with the reference to the Curriculum or to the Course you are attending, the service becomes easier.
6. Every one of you will receive from the Distance Education Unit -
 - An e-mail address and password through which all relevant information is sent by the Academic and Administrative staff (exam dates, announcements of advisors, accounting updates etc.)
 - A password to the electronic platform for monitoring, synchronously or asynchronously, the online courses (More relevant information is provided in the section for the e-learning platform, and in the user guide)

- A Student ID, which has a unique ten-digit number and which is the password for the services of our University Library [More relevant information is provided in the appendix for library services].
7. Based on the requirements of the remote methodology and keeping in mind the above, you are prompted to check your e-mail frequently.
 8. Also, within the framework of your study schedule, you should access the e-learning platform weekly for exercise answers and self-assessment activities, in addition to the specified online lessons.
 9. On page 37, contact details are listed as a Communication Aid with various services of the Cosmos Open University.

TRANSFERS AND RECOGNITION OF PREVIOUS DEGREES

1. In case you have attended a Bachelor's or Master's Degree programme at a recognized institution other than Cosmos Open University, you can apply for a transfer to our University's Master's Degree Programme.

2. You should submit the official documents with the detailed grades and the description of the courses, for which you have been successfully evaluated together with your relative application.

3. Next, the relevant mechanism for the recognition of courses is activated and a course assignment table is prepared. You will inform, to submit certified copies of your academic transcripts for exemption of credits and then proceed to registration and selection of courses for the upcoming academic semester(s).

PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

Our University implements a strict policy of protection of students' personal data in all aspects of communication and academic activity.

DISTANCE LEARNING EDUCATION

Open Distance Learning Education is by definition addressed to all those who want to follow a Curriculum which is offered on the basis of a new form of educational methodology.

Introduction – Philosophy

Open Education and consequently the open education systems that offer it are based on the philosophy that education is a right of all people throughout their lives. Based on this, the structure and operation of the relevant education system of Cosmos Open University are such that allow the application of this philosophy.

The features of this system are:

- No physical presence of the student in the classrooms is required
- Does not require any form of entrance exams
- There are no age restrictions
- The aim is to meet the needs of all stakeholders
- Educational opportunities are provided at all levels of study on the basis of a modular system that allows for a variety of options

Therefore, Open Education with the methodology of Distance Education gives you the opportunity to choose -

- Your preferred study area,

- study time, such as after work or late at night and
- the pace of knowledge acquisition.

Distance Education is provided at all levels of education, without the direct, continuous and physical presence of teachers in classrooms, but teachers are always at your disposal.

Distance Study or Distance Learning refers to you as student who is actively learning while at a distance from your teacher. In this context, you use the educational material appropriate to the methodology and the appropriate communication with the teacher.

The quality of the Distance Education provided is based on and depends, among other things, on the quality of the communication between you as students, teachers and the educational institution.

Distance Education is diverse, flexible and fully connected to the freedom of communication and information transfer options.

Educational Material

The educational material (textbooks, scientific articles, etc.) used in Open and Distance Education must meet certain requirements, such as clear wording, highlighting important points etc.

An essential accompanying element of the educational material is the relevant **Study Guide** and the counselling meetings with the Professor/Counsellor (group and individual) that take place through teleconferences.

The above provide you with the opportunity to self-regulate your learning without the presence of the Professor/Counsellor. The rate at which you learn is, to a large extent, decided by you and the rest is determined on the basis of the deadlines (written exams, submission of written assignments, etc.) imposed by the Curriculum.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Self-assessment exercises are one of the components at the core of Open and Distance Education and its educational material and must be accompanied by the correct answers.

These exercises give you the opportunity for continuous self-evaluation and further development or study to fill any cognitive gaps. It is obvious that the specific exercises can have any form, depending on the type of course and the imagination of the Professor/Counsellor, as long as the ultimate goal is met.

It goes without saying that nothing can stop you from looking at the feedback / correct answer for the specific exercise listed. The point is to move on to this after giving your own answer.

Written Assignments

1. The Written Assignments of the Curricula are a key element of the educational material, because on the one hand they are evaluated and on the other hand, the grade of these assignments is part of the final grade for each course.

2. In addition, through the Written Assignments one is able to:

- Learn about the progress and the skills and abilities you have acquired,
- Utilize comments and remarks, by the Professor/Counsellor, for further use,
- Assigned work will detect any weaknesses or omissions and questions, mobility for communication with the Professor/Counsellor.
- Deadlines are used for better utilization of time because they are important educational tools, the learning process is carried out in an inventive energetic way.

3. The written assignments are submitted electronically through the e-learning platform and thus the time limits set in relation to the deadline for their submission should be observed.

At the same time, this allows the work to be

- checked for plagiarism, and in case of a high indication of similarity to another work, to withdraw the paper immediately and submit a new paper before the deadline for submission.

- evaluated by the simultaneous incorporation of comments, suggestions for improvement, better wording and structure and other relevant issues sent to you as soon as possible

3. Assignments are the second component that completes the core of Open and Distance Education and are the main preparation for the final exams.

4. Each assignment includes two elements: evaluation and feedback. Therefore, the written works contain personal feedback and at the same time are an important tool to continue on the correct path. The feedback aims on the one hand to help in learning, but on the other hand encourages motivation.

5. In each course, assignments can be prepared, the type and format of which are determined by the Coordinators of the respective Curricula.

Communication

The communication and interaction of a Professor/Counsellor and you as students is achieved, among other things, with defined teleconferences through the e-learning platform and on predetermined days and hours.

Teleconferences

1. For each course, at least (6) Teleconferences are held.

2. The teleconferences take place on Saturday or Sunday, but in case they take place outside these days, then the time of the Teleconference is set late in the afternoon at a time convenient for most people.
3. Teleconferences last approximately one and a half hours, or longer if needed.
4. Please practice accessing and using the online distance learning platform and in case of technical problems, call: +357 99 XXX XXX, several hours before the start of any Teleconference.

Professor/Counsellor

The Professor/Counsellor:

1. Educates, supervises, guides a group of students and organizes and coordinates the Teleconferences.
2. Informs the coordinator of the Curriculum about the content, the subject of the discussions, the general atmosphere and the whole outcome of the meetings and cooperates with the coordinator for problem solving.
3. Establishes telephone communication ["office hours"] during which you have the opportunity to communicate with them for any academic or general topic related to your education. Generally, the response takes place in less than 24 hours.

4. Communicates via e-mail, preferably through the platform before the Teleconferences to provide a relevant reminder and indication of interest for students.

5. Contacts you for further information about what you have missed in Teleconferences, from which you were absent.

6. Additionally the Professor/Counsellor -

- i. focuses on your needs and interests by ensuring your active participation in your heuristic course towards learning in order to develop a critical way of thinking,
- ii. creates educational material adapted to the needs of the course and on the basis of the methodology of Open and Distance Education,
- iii. cooperates with the Administrative Staff for the solution of problems that might hinder the smooth conduct of the course and the examinations or other actions related to the course.

7. The Professor/Counsellor assists you in the use of the e-learning platform and related tools.

8. The Professor/Counsellor lists the curriculum per week in combination with self-assessment exercises, weekly activities and parallel texts to expand knowledge.

9. The Professor/Counsellor posts on the platform:

- i. Additional educational material (articles of interest, relevant references on the internet, relevant works, slides discussed in teleconferences, etc.),
- ii. An overview of any assignments or material,
- iii. Topics for discussion, exercises, etc. providing incentives to students to participate as well as any form of activity that will lead to the implementation of the Programme of Studies and the principles of Distance Education.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the misappropriation of another person's intellectual work and is on the one hand a very serious educational offense and on the other hand an illegal act.

Therefore, you are obliged:

- to deliver work that is a product of your own efforts
- state all references and any help you may have received from another person as well as the sources you use in the elaboration of your work.

The University, in order to ensure the high quality of the completed studies and to preserve the prestige and validity of its Degrees, uses a mechanism to control possible plagiarism.

If, through this mechanism, plagiarism is documented in a written assignment, then the work is not marked and at the same time, the competent body of the University investigates the whole issue and may impose additional penalties. Of course, it is pointed out that the use of your previous work is not allowed (self-theft).

EDUCATION PLATFORM

1. As students attending Study Programmes offered by the distance method, in addition to the academic requirements of the Programme, you must have:
 - i. a satisfactory level of digital and technological literacy, and

- ii. access to a computer with a broadband internet connection that must have speakers, a microphone and a camera.

2. For the Curricula offered within the methodology of Distance Learning, Cosmos Open University has created an electronic educational platform, using the Moodle system and Teams. The following is a brief description of the operation of these platforms:

Moodle

Moodle is an open source Learning Management System that enables the teacher to create an electronic learning environment, through which the following are implemented:

- Real-time discussions between participants
- Polls that allow the Lecturer to evaluate your views on the course
- Folders that teachers and students have the ability to upload files on and share with other users of the platform
- Fully customizable design and environment
- Post, play and collect data from audio, video, video, pdfs sources
- Integration with other systems, including Open Badges, Activity Directory, Google Drive & YouTube
- Discussion forums, and survey tools
- Content plagiarism control using appropriate tools
- Export system usage reports
- Evaluate and monitor user progress
- Informing students about their academic progress and their relevant obligations

Moodle also allows you to create different types of interactions with educational material:

- Assignments (posting files that are examined and graded by the teacher)
- Options (questions)
- Online exams (quizzes)
- Research (with findings available to the teacher or other students)
- Websites, graphics, JavaScript programmes, presentations and anything that works in a browser.

Moodle allows the installation of additional functions through small programmes (plugins).

[The user guide of the Moodle platform can be found in the space where this Guide is posted and contains more relevant information]

BBB: This platform simulates a virtual classroom in which the Professor/Counsellor teaches, guides and supports you from a distance on the heuristic path to knowledge.

More specifically:

- The Professor/Counsellors each individually create virtual classrooms that can operate simultaneously, so that different classes can be held at the same time.
- For each course you are enrolled in, you are informed through its calendar, of the relevant details (date, time, meeting objectives etc.).
- At the scheduled time of the teleconference, your access and participation is activated.
- Each scheduled virtual class is recorded and you can watch it, asynchronously, as many times as you wish.

Tools offered on the e-platform are:

- Participation in the discussion / lesson by activating a special icon, which is displayed on the surface of the PC
- Informing the teacher with the image of a raised "hand" next to the student's name.
- Camera and microphone control
- Extension of the conference call time
- Creating a vote
- Ability to share the teacher's screen with you
- Import / post files, documents, multimedia and more
- Common discussion space.

All the above possibilities are provided, regardless of whether the participants (professor and students) are at the University or at home.

[The user guide for TEAMS is listed in the space where this Guide is posted and contains more relevant information]

LIBRARY

1. The Library of our University adequately supports the Curricula by providing access to a rich collection of books and publications (mostly in electronic form), as well as in electronic databases.
2. The library staff is well trained and willing to offer services to users.
3. The operation of the library is supported by a complete electronic library system that supports modern international library standards and offers complete solutions to the most modern technological challenges related to the operation of a library.
4. The Cosmos Open University Library is also part of the Cyprus Academic Libraries Consortium, which helps the coordinated acquisition of material and access rights to electronic information sources by all publishers.
5. The Library, among others, offers a variety of online resources such as e-journals and e-books on the topics of various Curriculum and scientific databases.

Our University Library offers the following services, especially for

Distance Education:

- Access to search and retrieval services, such as WebPAC and Ebsco Discovery Service, scientific search engines, etc.

- Access to scientific databases, including two bibliographic databases and full-text units
- Access to print and digital collections
- Access to electronic magazines and electronic books
- Access to the depository of institutional works (dissertations, dissertations, faculty members' articles)
- Bibliography research tools, such as bibliography management solutions
- Provision of reporting and support services through print and electronic media
- Information education seminars (on the use of the library and its resources, but also the ways of bibliographic reports)
- Support Services (by phone and / or e-mail).

[The library user guide is listed in the space where this Guide is posted and contains more relevant information]

Communication Aid

Services	Name	Telephone (00 357)	e-mail
Distance Learning Unit	Lionarakis Antonis Ioannides - Clark Kiki Stylianides Nicolas Pavlakis Andreas	99888 169 99 314 033	kikiki@cosmos.ac.cy a.pavlakis@cosmos.ac.cy
Secretariat	Eleni Andreou	22 444 802 ext. 201 99 250 934	secr.dist@cosmos.ac.cy
IT Help Desk	Constantinou Andreas	22 444 803 ext. 208 99 742 930	helpdesk@cosmos.ac.cy
Library	Socratous Socratis	22 444 804 ext. 208 99 350 265	library@cosmos.ac.cy
Student Affairs	Gardiki Evi	22 444 805 ext. 203 99 550 640	st.affairs@cosmos.ac.cy

15/11/2022