

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 03/06/2021



- **Higher Education Institution:**
Cyprus International Institute of Management (CIIM)
- **Town:** Limassol (Branch)
- **Programme of study Name**

MSc Applied Information Technologies, 14 months,
90 ECTS, Master of Science
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations
In English: Concentrations

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Findings

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

1. CIIM Quality Assurance processes and instructions are documented in the Quality Assurance Handbook and there are both internal and external processes for monitoring and ensuring quality of the educational programs. The internal Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) is responsible for the QA within the school. The QAC consists of the CIIM Director, three members of the teaching staff, one member specializing in QA, two student representatives (undergraduate and graduate student), and two representatives from the administration.
2. The Academic Committee is responsible for the educational programs including creating and updating programs as well as monitoring the delivery of education. The CIIM Academic Council, consisting of academics from international universities, is an external QA mechanism responsible for the monitoring and assessment of programs.
3. A systematic program-wide review takes place every five years or when the need arises. Internal Annual Review process inspects course grade reports for irregularities.
4. The study program is based on short-term modules that students can select. A student can start the studies at any time. The modules are delivered across two distinct campuses.

Strengths

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

1. Every student is assigned a faculty member who acts as an advisor and tutor until the student graduates. The tutoring system is used to gather student feedback and detect bottlenecks in programs.
2. Staff seemed to manage effectively the delivery of the study modules across two distinct campuses. No apparent issues were identified arising from this.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

1. A mechanism should be developed to ensure the coherence of the study program. This is very important since it was not always clear as to the rationale adopted for the inclusion or indeed exclusion of curricula content.

The program has courses between two poles. One pole concerns the modern technological infrastructure that is available to a corporation. It contains foundation courses to accommodate students with a general quantitative background into the program as well as introduce them to information technology. It also contains courses on various parts of a modern technology infrastructure such as programming languages based on different principles, databases, cloud computing, web/mobile development, and machine/deep learning. The courses also address the interactions of the various technologies at a meta level, such as databases with cloud computing.

The second pole concerns business management, and the management of information systems. It contains foundation courses on management of information systems and more advanced topics on the digital transformation and on emerging technologies with high impact on businesses such as blockchain, the web, and artificial intelligence. It also includes a course on information security alerting business about the digital risks and equipping them with the necessary tools and reasoning to deal with effectively.

Technology on subjects that are invisible to their use are not included. Also, technological subjects that do not involve the interaction between different technologies are deemphasized. Basic, exclusively business courses, are not included because it is assumed that students upon entering the program will have the necessary educational background and/or work experience; if they don't, they are required to take remedial business courses as electives from other CIIM programmes. Technology and information technology are meaningful in a specific context, in this case management and business. It is a multi-disciplinary master's program for the digital transformation of business that is a prerequisite for the effective and efficient transition of economy and society to the modern digital era, including remote work and online business. It is widely accepted, that the technology illiteracy, especially within SMEs, and the ever widening digital divide needs to be bridged. This programme aims to upskill and reskill people with the necessary and sufficient technological knowledge and skills to accelerate the digital transformation of business.

In order to strengthen further the rationale adopted for the inclusion or exclusion of curricula content, and to increase the programme's coherence, as the EEC recommended, **we revised the programme curriculum** as follows:

- *AT700 Emerging Technologies* was replaced with **AT700 Algorithms and data structures**
- *AT500 Data analytics* was replaced with **AT500 Applied artificial intelligence and deep learning**
- *AT400 Blockchain, DLT and smart contracts* was replaced with **AT400 Blockchain and applications**
- We also removed from the core curriculum the *BI400 Management of information systems* and from the electives, thereby saving 6 ECTS which we allocated to the AT1000 Final research project increasing its credits from 12 to 18 ECTS, as recommended by the EEC
- We changed the **AT1000 Final research project** from optional to mandatory
- Finally, we eliminated two elective courses *AT850 Applications of Technologies: Finance, Insurance, Legal & Regulation* and *BI725 Technology Ventures: From Idea to Execution* since their subject matter is

covered by other courses and both can be research topics for the mandatory Final research project to be undertaken by all the programme's students.

The **Revised Curriculum** is attached as Annex 7, and the **Course Descriptors** of the new and revised courses are attached as Annexes 7a, 7b, 7c.

Since the study programme is based on short-term modules, there is always an issue of coherence as the EEC points out. However, as CIIM was one of the pioneers of this system in the early 1990s, and has employed it in all its programmes ever since, it has put in place a mechanism to ensure programme coherence and integration of the modular course structure. For the specific programme under review coherence is achieved through:

- The programme's tight management and coordination by the Programme Director who serves also as course and instructor coordinator and overall advisor to the students, as it is the case with all CIIM programmes.
- The programme orientation event at the start of each academic year and cohort
- The sequencing of courses and the establishment of prerequisites for advanced courses
- A mandatory introduction at the beginning of each course that links the subject to the already taught courses and those to follow plus a healthy overlap between courses
- The designation of some courses as capstone courses e.g. Foundations of business information technology (BI395); Digital transformation of businesses & organizations (AT600); Algorithms and data structures (AT700); and the Final research project (AT1000), made mandatory at the recommendation of the EEC.
- The coordination of teaching and research faculty through area faculty meetings
- The consideration of student feedback after each module, while in the program, and overall after completion

2. It was less than clear as to the unique selling point of graduates from the proposed programme. Were such graduates to be software engineers/programmers or someone that understood the process of software development and would manage this process.

The unique selling point of graduates will be the mastering of digital tools and technologies upon the completion of the programme that will enable them to support and accelerate the digital transformation of business and its management. We aim to upskill students with the necessary and sufficient technological knowledge and skills so that they will be in position to apply them in digitally transforming their place of employment or securing employment in businesses requiring these skills.

3. It was not fully clear how short-term and long-term recruitment planning is conducted with respect to the strategic goals of the program and the institute.

The strategic goal of the programme is the acceleration of digital transformation of business through both teaching and research. With the continuous advancement of digital technologies, the digital transformation of business and society is a journey, not a destination. Therefore, we planned both our faculty recruitment into the school and student recruitment into the programme, for both the short-term and the long term:

With regard to faculty recruitment: In the short-term (first year), we recruited key faculty, such as the programme director and instructors for core subjects including both resident and visiting faculty; we also drew on the faculty of the sister programme the MSc in Business intelligence and Data Analytics. For the longer term, we have mapped the projected number of students beyond the first year and drew an annual faculty recruitment plan to maintain the faculty/student ratio under 1:10. For academic year 2021-22, we

planned the recruitment of up to two new resident faculty members in Computer Science and Information Technologies. We advertised internationally (Annex 1 Faculty Positions Announcement) and we are currently in the process of interviewing 7 shortlisted candidates out of the 30 that have applied. In the first stage in the recruitment process, we consider their academic background to first ensure that they are strong academically in terms of both their research publication record and their teaching skills and experience. In the second stage in the recruitment process, we consider their expertise in the specific subject areas in which they will be teaching. Ideally, we aim for each new faculty recruit to have expertise and experience in at least two digital technologies and their business applications so that they can teach and do research on both subjects and their interaction.

With regard to student recruitment: In the short-term (first year) we planned to recruit only 24 students (12 for each campus) through our business affiliates and corporate partners who have already expressed a strong interest in the programme for their mid-level managerial staff. We will be very selective, recruiting mainly students with good STEM degrees and substantial business experience, to establish a solid reputation for the programme. In the longer-term, starting in year 2, we will promote the programme more widely locally and internationally, to increase both the numbers and the diversity of the student body. However, we have planned for an upper limit of 40 students (20 for each campus) to maintain the student/faculty ratio under 10:1 and closer to 5:1 for the programme, and in line with the lab capacity and other instructional resources of the programme.

4. The staff members can allocate 30% of the work time for research; however, the strategic support for research and research-based target indicators should be clarified and communicated to the staff members. The current Research Policy, updated annually (Annex 2 Research Policy) was instituted 5 years ago providing that 30% of the faculty workload is allocated to research and specifying the strategic support for research and research-based target indicators and communicated to the faculty members as integral part of their contracts and in the Faculty Handbook (Annex 3 Faculty Handbook). The Research Director reiterates annually both the support and the research target indicators:
The research and publication requirements for the resident faculty are stated in their contracts in terms of points (30 out of 100). These points are accumulated from any combination of the following:

- Internationally published Academic Research: Publication of a paper in an A-tier journal (30 points); publication of a paper in a B-tier journal (15 points); publication in C-tier refereed journal (10 points) publication of a textbook or an academic-calibre book (20 points). The Journal Ranking List CIIM uses for Economics and Business publications is given in Annex 4 and for Computer Science publications is found in : <https://www.scimagojr.com/> and [Topic Browser | ETAP - Publications | Microsoft Academic](#)
- Internationally published Applied Business Research: International publication of a monograph based on applied business research of global interest, OR a major book chapter in an international business book (10 points); OR an internationally published case study or international conference proceedings (10 points);
- Published Instructional Research related to pedagogy or teaching and learning (10 points)
- Locally or regionally published applied business research on themes that have a significant impact locally or regionally (5 points)
- Doctoral Thesis supervision (when it becomes available) for up to three doctoral candidates (5 points per doctoral thesis supervised and completed).

CIIM's Research Office assist faculty in preparing research proposals for national, EU and international projects and grants. The Director of CIIM's Research Center directs the Research activities of CIIM, of its faculty and of

its collaborations; monitors research call announcements, identifies research calls from EU, Research & Innovation Foundation and others relevant to CIIM and related to CIIM faculty's initiate and engage CIIM's resident & visiting faculty in the preparation and submission of research proposals.

5. The EEC observed that staff members were not fully aware of the relevant administrative processes and policies. The EEC recommends the organization of training events and tutorials for the staff members regarding the administrative processes and increasing interaction in joint planning of the study program.

The EEC observation that staff members were not fully aware of the relevant administrative processes and policies must have come from a couple of very recent hires who have not yet the chance to go through all the briefings and training that new staff go through during the first year of their employment. We appreciate the EEC recommendation and we are now organizing regularly scheduled tutorials for the staff regarding administrative processes and interaction in joint planning of the study program.

6. The lack of independent external oversight (common in reputable European Universities) of the proposed M.Sc. program and examination processes are of concern and should be addressed.

We agree with the EEC that an external examiner is necessary to provide oversight for the Programme in its entirety. In our case, the specialist from each subject area on CIIM's independent international Academic Council (see attached Annex 11 Academic Council), comprised of distinguished academics from top universities acts as the external examiner for the programmes related to his/her subject area. For the MSc in Applied Information Technologies, as well as the MSc in Business Intelligence and Data Analytics, Prof. Philip Treleaven, Professor of Computing at University College London and Director at the U.K. Centre for Financial Computing & Analytics of UCL, University of London (Annex 12 brief CV of Prof. Philip Treleaven), provides the overall oversight.

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

Findings

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

1. CIIM is a private, for-profit institution, supported by investors - implications for commitment of resources to maintain good staff-student ratio for the projected expansion in student numbers of 24 students in the first year increasing to 40 students in the second year.
2. The students have to pass 90 ECTS credits in total: of these 66 credits are compulsory and 24 credits are elective courses. The project worth 12 credits is optional.
3. The dual-campus offering has the benefits of economy of scale but has implications for the work-load on the lecturers (offering 3 modules, twice) and ensuring parity in coursework and examination levels of difficulty for the two offerings in Nicosia and Limassol.
4. The style of offering the programme modules sequentially in 2-week blocks is a practice favoured in MBA programmes. How well does this transfer to the course under review? The lecturers seem to favour it, although students hinted wanting more time to assimilate the material before the examination.
5. The course under review will be peeling some of the numerate courses from the current MSc 4Business Intelligence and Data Analytics programme and adding some new modules. The new course

is lacking in coherence and a clear image of the strengths of the graduating students.

6. The lack of independent external oversight (common in reputable European Universities) of the proposed Masters course and examination processes is of concern and should be addressed.

Strengths

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

1. CIIM's international reputation has been based on their experience of conducting the MBA course for around 30 years. More recently they have been offering a numerate MSc degree in Business Intelligence and Data Analytics. This experience will serve them well in offering the proposed new course in Applied Information Technologies.
2. CIIM has already in place the physical infrastructure and support staff to run similar courses.
3. The dual-campus offering has the benefits of economy of scale whilst providing access to postgraduate education to students living/working in the region around Limassol.
4. The 2-week long, sequential modules- based course structure with lectures and activities scheduled during evenings and Saturdays makes the course attractive for working students who wish to up-skill at the Masters level.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

1. CIIM should publish a work-load model for its core and adjunct faculty which balances research, teaching and administration. This should be linked to its target staff-student ratio on the proposed MSc course so that the quality of student experience and the work-life balance of teaching staff is maintained with the projected increase in student numbers.

The standard staff workload model balancing research, teaching and administration is available in "CIIM Policy Statement on Resident Faculty Responsibilities" (Annex 5 Policy Statement on Resident Faculty Responsibilities) and is implemented in individual faculty contracts, taking into account each appointed faculty's strengths and preferences. As provided in the Faculty Handbook (Annex 3), faculty may opt for more research and less teaching and administration in their workload and vice versa. The resulting actual workload distribution at present can be seen in the attached Table "Documentation of staff workload model" (Annex 6 Staff workload model), which is consistent with annual target number of students (an upper limit of 40).

2. The syllabus for the course should have a coherent core which reflects the image of the students graduating from the course. We would wish this to be better elucidated.

The curriculum of the programme, as it is already amended along the lines of EEC recommendations (see attached Annex 7 Revised Curriculum), does have a coherent core which reflects the image of the students graduating from the course, as it was explained in detail in response to EEC recommendation 1.1 above.

3. The Masters project should be a critical component of any postgraduate course- a significant piece of independent work which brings together the material taught in the course and supervised by a member of the teaching staff. The project should be compulsory and awarded greater credit (at least 18 credits) than is currently the case.

In response to this recommendation, the individual research project has now been made mandatory and increased to 18 ECTS (see attached Annex 7 Revised Curriculum). The program director and the 8 other programme faculty will be serving as research project advisors, depending on the relevance of their expertise to the student's project focus.

4. The appointment of an independent external examiner should be mandatory for the new course.

We agree with the EEC that an external examiner is necessary to provide oversight for the Programme in its entirety. In our case, the specialist from each subject area on CIIM's independent international Academic Council (see Annex 11 Academic Council), comprised of distinguished academics from top universities acts as the external examiner for the programmes related to his/her subject area. For the MSc in Applied Information Technologies, as well as the MSc in Business Intelligence and Data Analytics, Prof. Philip Treleaven, Professor of Computing at University College London and Director at the U.K. Centre for Financial Computing & Analytics of UCL, University of London (see Annex 12 brief CV Prof. Philip Treleaven), provides the overall oversight.

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Findings

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

1. Overall the management of the School/Programme could benefit from further delegation of responsibilities. The creation of a cabinet to oversee key School portfolios, e.g., curriculum management, examinations, research, external engagement. Examples of routine oversight that would benefit the School would be regular programme/year review meetings; year tutors and course tutors;
2. Staff did not seem to understand how responsibilities are divided when recruiting new staff members;
3. There is a stated objective of staff to spend 30% of time in research. Staff were aware of this and seemed to believe they had sufficient time to engage in research;
4. It was observed that the staff recruited were academically strong. However, post recruitment both the number and quality of staff research outputs seemed generally to decline. This may be indicative of a number of things: too little time for research; insufficient recognition of the importance of research by the institute; an environment that does not support research;
5. The institute supports staff training and various courses are organized and available.;
6. The ratio of female staff was unclear;
7. The staff seemed to feel that the teaching burden was reasonable in particular given that often the teaching load was comprised of lectures delivered twice one at each site;
8. Anonymous student evaluations of staff are routinely conducted and this feedback is used in refinements of the material and it's presentation. This feedback seems to be freely available to staff however how this impacts upon appraisal/promotion is unclear;
9. Staff seemed to manage effectively the delivery of the module across two distinct campuses. No apparent issues were identified arising from this;
10. Research did seem to underpin teaching. However, one wonders if the curriculum programme is 'defined' wholly by the research interests of the staff. A danger exists that as a consequence there is no clear rationale for the curriculum offering.

Strengths

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

A number of strengths were identified:

1. The students currently benefit from a very good teacher-student ratio (1:4). The teachers have frequent office hours and are accessible to the student body within these times and indeed beyond these times. Students reported on the high levels of support offered by staff and were highly complimentary of responsiveness of staff to queries and requests for advice/support;
2. The small student cohort seems to engendered a strong bond within the student group and indeed between students and staff.
3. Students on pre existing programmes felt that they were being equipped by the staff with relevant,

- sought after skill sets that were attractive to potential employers;
4. Students were supportive of the Institute's brand and the qualifications that it would ultimately bestow upon them;
 5. Student feedback does seem to be duly taken into account. A student mentoring system is operational and does appear to provide an appropriate vehicle for both expression of students views/problems/feedback and a mechanism for recording and subsequently considering and addressing such issues.
 6. Student welfare and wellbeing does seem to be adequately monitored;
 7. Visiting and adjunct teaching staff of high quality have been used to good effect in the past. However, a policy of altering this balance and converting visiting/adjunct positions to permanent full time positions is underway. This is both noted and welcomed.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

1. A clear workload model needs to be agreed, discussed and updated annually to accurately reflect current workload for all staff. This model ought to be visible. Annually a staff meeting should discuss relative load and balance across the cohort of academic staff within the School/Subject area.
2. This workload model does exist but is not sufficiently evident in and seems not to be sufficient to democratise workload;

(Combined answer to points 3.1 and 3.2 above):

As it has been described briefly in response to recommendation 2.1 above, this is actually what is happening. It is further elaborated here. First, there is an agreed workload model which specifies the standard workload allocation among the faculty in terms of teaching (30%), research (30%), administration (30%) and community outreach (10%). (This is set in the "CIIM Policy Statement on Resident Faculty Responsibilities" (Annex 5) which was proposed by the Management, in consultation and with the agreement of the faculty and sanctioned by the Board of Governors). The standard workload allocation model is indicative and the starting point in negotiating contracts for new faculty or renewals of existing ones. Faculty contracts may diverge from the standard model since some faculty members opt for a lower teaching and administration load in exchange for doing more research and vice versa. Both the workload model and the flexibility around it are incorporated in the Faculty Handbook (Annex 3) which is annually updated. In advance of each academic year, Faculty meetings take place at three levels: the entire school, the programme level and the functional subject area to discuss and agree on the relative workload and balance among the faculty for the following academic year in light of past experience and evaluation as well as the introduction of new courses, the recruitment of new faculty and expected changes in student numbers. These meetings, which are organized by the Director of Academic Affairs in coordination with the Programme Directors, determine the ultimate workload allocation down to the number of courses, the number of ECTS, the number of teaching hours, and the maximum number of students in each class to be taught and the number of projects to be supervised by each faculty member.

The limited visibility and democratization of the workload, sensed by the EEC, might have been due to the new faculty recruits, as mentioned in point 5 of section study programme and study programmes design

and development, who joined CIIM in the middle of the current academic year, and may have not yet experienced the full cycle of our workload allocation processes, even though they have been briefed. This is a temporary occurrence as we currently undergoing the replacement of visiting faculty by permanent full-time faculty. A faculty meeting, with the participation of both old and new faculty, took place on May 31st and a new one is planned for late June to ensure that new staff not only get faster on board, but also participate and contribute to the workload allocation right from the start (for new staff, we usually allow a semester with reduced teaching and admin workload)

3. A clear policy needs to exist and be made visible which will incentivise and adequately reward the securing and participation in research grants. Faculty can allocate 30% of their time to research. The research emphasis is commendable; however, the staff members would benefit from additional and continuous support for research and preparing scientific publications. The number of publications and research projects reported by the teaching staff is not very high. The link between research and education could be significantly enhanced through establishing research projects and research collaborations.

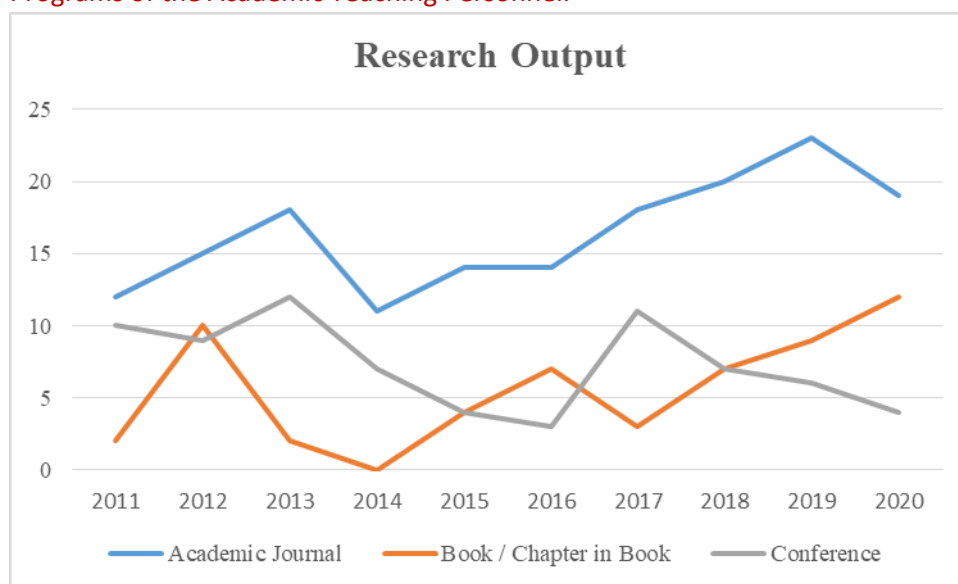
We explained CIIM's Research Policy, its incentives and visibility in responding to recommendations 1.4. Below we elaborate on support for research and for preparing scientific publications and its enhancement through research projects and research collaborations.

CIIM's Research Center directs the Research activities of CIIM, of its faculty and of its collaborations. The Center, is responsible for identifying national, EU and international funding opportunities, assuring compliance with all applicable regulations, policies and procedures, assisting in grant agreement and contract negotiations, helping with the procedural management of active research projects and disseminating project results and ensure the protection of any intellectual property developed during the project. The Center initiates and engages CIIM's resident & visiting faculty in the preparation and submission of research proposals. The Research Office within the Center assists faculty in preparing research proposals for national, EU and international projects and grants.

CIIM provides to its faculty an excellent environment for research, including a computer lab, a library & study room, a board & seminar room, and a dedicated doctoral student room with workstations. Computer facilities include a lab and a computer center that houses six high power servers, for internet connection, the School intranet and the library and administration needs. The computer laboratory and the lab include more than fifteen (now increased to 25) high-power computers (with comprehensive software), all connected to the Internet with a fast leased line. Faculty members and students can also have access to our Intranet system from home. The student database software system is online based, and all CIIM admin staff and faculty have access to it both from the office and from home. CIIM students have access to the Student Intranet portal which can be found in the top left corner of the CIIM website. Through this portal they can access their courses, register for new ones, check their CIIM student emails. In addition to these features they can also access course material and/or submit their assignments through the Moodle platform; access the online Library, as well as, the helpdesk through which they can submit their questions to the relevant department by using a ticketing system. Finally, the Library's mission is to provide high quality and innovative information services which support CIIM's present and future learning, teaching and research.

EEC’s finding that the number of publications and research projects reported by the teaching staff is not very high applies more to the past than to the present and much less to the future as the new faculty hires of CIIM have a strong publication record and a rich research pipeline, and are given reduced or zero teaching load to continue to publish. For example, newly recruited Professor of Economics Itzhak Venezia was given a 100%-time allocation to research, while Professor of Marketing Waldemar Pförtsch was given a 60%- time allocation to research and a lighter teaching load and no administrative duties other than participation in Committees.

In recent years, CIIM has experienced a positive trend in its members’ research output. From 2011 to 2020 the annual refereed academic journal articles increased from 12 to 19 while books and chapters in books increased from 2 to 12 as seen in the chart below. Additionally, CIIM’s research output includes 31 working papers. Furthermore, CIIM’s faculty members are actively participating in research projects. CIIM already absorbed external funding for research, innovation and development including the Intereg Balkan i3 Project and the Widespread 01-2018-2019 of Horizon Trace Project Teaming Phase I. The Institution has successfully completed public tenders with PWC, Strategesia, a project for Public Administration. CIIM is currently participating in the Innovate call of the Research and Innovation Foundation named NanoPro, as well as on the Management of Learning in Public Administration (parties in consortium: E&Y and IMH C.S.C Ltd). The CIIM Research Center has been enhanced by academics and researchers and by the end of the year 2020 submitted more than 10 proposals under the calls Erasmus KA2, Horizon, Green Deal, Cohesion Fund, EEA and Norway Grants Fund, COST and Research & Innovation Foundation. For more information on the research output of CIIM, please see attached Annex 8 Catalogue of Publications & Research Programs of the Academic Teaching Personnel.



4. A clear process needs to be formulated and communicated to staff around how cases for additional faculty may be made, the criteria upon which these ought to be based (eg staff Student ratio SSR), how they will be adjudicated on and who will adjudicate upon them.

Such a process does exist but, apparently, we failed to explain it clearly enough to satisfy the Committee; it could also be the case that some of the newly recruited faculty, as explained earlier, have not yet fully

internalized the process. In any case, there is a need for making the process abundantly clear and transparent in response to this EEC suggested area of improvement, which we have done and we summarize here:

The recruitment and promotions of resident academic personnel is linked to the development and offering of new programmes and the addition of new courses to existing programmes as well as the University's research strategy. There is a procedure for determining whether a new course is best taught by existing resident faculty, a new resident faculty or a visiting faculty from Cyprus or from abroad. Normally, recruitment of resident academic personnel follows the launching of new programmes while the needs of new courses that cannot be handled by existing faculty are met temporarily by visiting faculty. The planning for faculty hiring, whether resident or visiting is ultimately connected to the School's academic development and strategic objectives which include the acceleration of research productivity and research output and the continuous upgrading and expanding the full-time resident faculty. A key criterion for new faculty recruitment is the maintenance of the faculty-student ratio as student numbers increase over time, up to a predetermined ceiling. The need for additional faculty may also arise from retirements, sabbaticals and requests by existing faculty to reduce their teaching load in order to concentrate on research.

The request can be initiated by the Department Chairman, one or more Programme Directors or the Head of the area discipline concerned. The proponent sends a proposal to the Dean and the Academic Affairs Director, who brings the matter to the Academic Committee, in which both faculty and students are represented. The Committee discusses the merits of the proposal and makes recommendations to the Dean. A Committee consisting of the Dean, the Executive Director and the CFO discusses the financial implications, and if agreeable refers the matter for approval to the Board of Governors. For full-time permanent faculty, the approval of the Head of the Institution and the Board is needed for the position to be advertised and an ad hoc Search Committee to be constituted. The ad hoc Search Committee announces the positions internationally, shortlists the candidates, contacts the interviews and makes recommendations to the Faculty Selection and Promotion Committee chaired by the Dean for the final recruitment decision, which is sent to the Board for approval.

When CIIM will be transformed into a University the School Faculty Selection Committee (SFSC), provided by its Charter assumes the role of the Search Committee, and the following selection process will be followed.

The Selection Process

The selection process of the University's Academic Staff includes the below steps:

- Job vacancies are advertised inviting submission of applications for vacancy(ies) accompanied by a curriculum vita, a complete list and sample of research publications, and a multiple of academic references from a subset of which the Committee will solicit references
- The School Faculty Selection Committee (SFSC), in which the Department Chairperson participates, scrutinizes the applications received for the job vacancy and narrowed them down to a short list of well-qualified candidates who are invited for a preliminary interview. In case the candidate is abroad, then a videoconference shall be conducted with the members of the SFSC
- Shortlisted candidates will be then invited to give a presentation before a panel which includes all Department faculty with a rank not lower than the one the candidates have applied for
- The Committee will accordingly select the best candidates in order of preference.

- The faculty remuneration is negotiated by the School Dean, within faculty salary scales in effect. If the two sides reach an agreement, the decision is submitted to the Board of Governors (BOG) for approval
 - Upon the BOG approval the selected candidate will accordingly sign the Employment Contract and be appointed at the rank of the academic position approved
 - If no agreement is reached, then the next candidate is invited. If the Committee is not satisfied by any of the candidate, then the position shall remain vacant or the job vacancy shall be re-advertised.
 - In the context of the University, the final decision shall be made by the institution's Selection and Promotion Committee (SPC), Chaired by the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs. The decisions of the SPC shall be subject to the approval of the Senate, which retains the right to send back to the SPC a case for re-examination purposes
 - The same Committees, are responsible for the promotions of the Faculty members. The members of both committees have a rank not lower than the highest one the candidates have applied for; otherwise they are only acting members, until such time that sufficient numbers reach the prescribed rank
 - The elements that the Committees for each candidate's application for promotion consider relate to whether the candidate meets the requirements for the position with particular emphasis on research and whether the surrounding circumstances endorse the applicant's promotion. The Committees have also the right to request further references, or to call the applicant for an interview
 - Ultimately, the Senate and the Council shall approve all initial rankings or promotions
 - The applicants may appeal to the decision within fifteen (15) days from the announcement of the decision. The appeal shall be received by the Rector of the University
5. Faculty contracts would appear to benefit from more detail and less ambiguity. Certain faculty seemed unclear as to the duration of their contract and exact details around terms and conditions.

By decision of the Board of Governors all faculty have two-year contracts renewable for another two years. This is explicit in the very first page on their contract. The terms and conditions are made clear in their contract which runs into 7-9 pages. There is no ambiguity. Attached are the standard faculty contracts for Resident and Visiting Faculty (Annexes 9 and 9a respectively). If any faculty member *"seemed unclear as to the duration of their contract and exact details around terms and conditions"*, it must have been a new faculty member in the midst of contract negotiations, before the terms were finally settled and the contract signed.

6. Staff promotion processes need to be made clearer. Faculty did not appear to be aware of the promotion process. It appears that progression is constrained within National policies but notwithstanding this a clear policy/procedure roadmap is required and this needs to be made visible to all staff. This document should set out any staff appraisal policies, promotion application processes, assessment and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will be used, provide examples of performance and accomplishments that would be expected of different grades;

"The Selection and Promotions Committee, chaired by the Chairman of CIIM's international Academic Council, with the participation of the Dean ex officio manages the process of assessment of resident faculty for promotion. This committee solicits references, reviews the applicant's past record of performance including teaching, research publications and presentations, and administrative contributions and request any further information as it may deem necessary. They assess the faculty members' qualifications relative

to the stated requirements of the position in question taking into account past performance in previous positions with the Institute (see above section on "Resident Faculty Qualifications" and "Evaluation of Resident Faculty"). Faculty members, who have the rank to which promotion is sought and above, vote on the promotion recommendation of the Selection and Promotion Committee." (The Faculty Handbook, Annex 3, details the process for when CIIM becomes University).

7. Staff would benefit from teaching 'buy out' possibilities if large grants with overheads were secured; Research Faculty

An explicit provision in the School's **Policy Statements** in force (updated 2016, 2018, and 2020) provides the following incentives for faculty:

- Reduced teaching and administration workload for new faculty candidates with solid research record and ambitious research and publication plan to attract star researchers to apply for faculty positions
- Ability of existing faculty to buy back part of their teaching time to focus on their research by drawing on the Department's Research Fund. For this, they must apply to the Department Chairperson with a request for workload reallocation from teaching and/or administration towards research and correspondingly the weight of research in their evaluation. Their application must be accompanied with an outline of their research and publication plans. An amount of 70,000 euro has been budgeted for this purpose for the academic year 2021-2022.

Furthermore, the **Faculty Handbook**, provides for the appointment of Research Faculty as follows:

"Research faculty is a sub-category of the resident academic faculty with a drastically reduced teaching load (under 50% and, in rare cases, with no teaching at all), which applies only to eminently accomplished and highly published academics carrying out frontier research of great scientific significance, that enhances appreciably the institution's reputation. In addition, the post requires successful research grant applications of significant merit and budget. The appointment to a research faculty position can be in any academic rank but normally at the rank of full professor, in the case of star academics, or at the level of a newly-hired lecturer or assistant professor, in the case of highly promising junior academics with an ambitious research agenda and solid funding prospects (e.g. ERC grants) (In the latter case, the teaching load reduction will be for the first two years of the appointment, renewable depending on performance, and finances)".

The above provisions have been applied recently to appoint Professor Itzhak Venezia (100%-time allocation to research) and Professor Waldemar Pförtsch (60% allocation to research).

8. Faculty would benefit from a formal year/term sabbatical scheme;

According to the Faculty Handbook (attached), sabbatical leave may be granted to a Faculty member in order to improve or develop his/her professional capabilities. To become eligible for sabbatical leave, faculty members must have served a minimum of seven years as resident faculty members of the University. Following the first sabbatical leave, faculty must work at the University for a minimum of 7 years before he/she can be granted a second sabbatical. During the sabbatical leave faculty should be engaged in substantial research and other related work. During the sabbatical period, the Faculty member enjoys the same level of financial remuneration that he/she had at the start of his/her sabbatical period. The faculty member needs to complete an application where the purpose of the sabbatical leave is explicitly indicated. A Faculty member who has benefited from a sabbatical period is committed to continue working with the institution for a further period equal to that of the sabbatical period, otherwise is obliged to return the same level of financial remuneration that he/she received during the sabbatical leave. Decisions on sabbatical leave are made by the School's Dean in consultation with the Department Chair and relevant Programme Directors taking into account the requirements of the institution and its financial situation. Sabbatical leaves have been rare in the recent past due to both the limited number of full-time faculty and the financial



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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



situation and the pandemic. We expect that with the on-going increase in the cadre of full-time faculty and the strengthening of financial conditions and the easing of the pandemic the sabbatical scheme will be re-activated.

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

Findings

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

1. The admission procedure for recruitment of students is well defined. A degree from an accredited university or college is required. All applicants must undergo an interview with the Director and Co-Director of the program. The program's language of instruction is English and as result a proficiency of language is required.
2. The learning objectives are communicated to students for each course and students are aware of their obligations in their academic progress. The students can monitor their progress and get efficient feedback.

Strengths

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

1. The possibility is offered to students to transfer credits earned from an accredited institution.
2. Communication between students and teachers is active due to the small community.
3. A student mentoring system is operational and appears to function well.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

1. The selection system could include other possible aspects such as "statement of purpose", recommendation letters or a CV.

Indeed, the selection system, includes a "statement of purpose", recommendation letters, and a CV which are all part of the application form, and they have been so for all our programmes without exception since the establishment of CIIM 30 years ago. This requirement is stated on the application form (see Annex 10 CIIM Student Admission Application Form).

2. It is unclear in the public literature what the minimum average grade(GPA) of the applicant should be.

There is a strongly preferred GPA of 2:1 for UK degrees, 3:0 for US degrees and 6.5+ for Greek degrees, which are clear to the interviewers and to the admission officers. Slightly lower GPAs may be accepted if there are compensating factors, such as other academic distinctions, or exceptional analytical, mathematical or leadership skills or substantial managerial experience. Experience has taught us, that depending on the programme specific skills are more critical than the overall GPA. For example, quantitative skills are essential for Data Analytics, Applied Information Technologies and Finance, while leadership skills are pivotal for the MBA and the MSc in Human Resources Management. This is why there is no clear cut-off GPA; to afford a measure of flexibility which is used sparingly and with appropriate rationale. The EEC recommendation for an explicit minimum average grade(GPA) of the applicant is well taken and can be easily instituted if the Committee views it as critical, but our experience tell us

that graduates of top universities with say a 2:2 GPA tend to be superior in our programmes compared to students with a 2:1 GPA from mediocre, yet accredited universities.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Findings

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

1. The evaluation took place over an online meeting and the tour of the institute was based on the video and description provided through documentation. The physical resources were found to be generally of good quality, but in the remote meeting with students and graduates, it was mentioned that the infrastructure could be improved.
2. The Moodle system is used to make available the course material as well as to deliver the assignments, which increases the availability and accessibility of the content of the program. It is also used for communication between teachers and students to solve any questions that may appear.
3. There is a computer laboratory, which can be used daily during the opening hours and it offers high-end computers, 6 servers and internet connection in all areas. There are also 5 classrooms, 1 amphitheater, 1 library that can be used as a study space and 1 room for seminars, in the institute in Nicosia. In the institute in Limassol there are 4 classrooms and 1 library that can be used as a study space.
4. The library has signed exchange/loan agreements with other libraries in Cyprus.
5. On registration, every student is assigned a member of the academic faculty who acts as his/her academic advisor, until he/she graduates. It must be ensured that the student receives effective support, appropriate to their individual needs.

Strengths

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

1. Flexibility of the programme to offer part time study and lectures in the evenings after office hours for workers.
2. The physical infrastructure and premises can be accessible to students with disabilities.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

1. The computer laboratory supports a capacity of 33 people and contains more than 15 computers, and as a result the students must often work in groups during the lessons according to how the lecturer assigns them. This does not allow each student to work individually on a computer. The ratio of computers to students at the institute could be improved.

The computer labs have been updated with 10 additional computers, and the Limassol lab was extended to accommodate extra equipment and students. We have also added additional computers in the library and other study rooms which can be used by students individually. We do also have full Wi-Fi access throughout both campuses which students are free to use on their personal devices allowing them to access their student services and resources.

2. A student cannot have remotely access to files stored on a laboratory computer. It would be a nice idea to support a VPN service where it will allow students to access the institute's network directly through a secure encrypted channel and thus be able to access their files as well as the laboratory's resources.

We have been using Moodle to post all course material and resources that are available to students for all their courses. As to the VPN service, we have partnered with Microsoft to setup cloud lab services which will be available to faculty and students, before the new programme is launched. These services will allow students to run various software programs, simulations and access all the School's instructional resources.

3. The institute can consider adding a new computer laboratory that will be accessible 24/7. We have extended Lab opening hours until 10pm, during which students can have full access to the computers and other facilities and IT equipment. Around the clock labs, on a 24/7 basis, have been tried in the past but discontinued due to lack of use by the students beyond 10 pm as well as security concerns. This has been the case with most universities and colleges in Cyprus. If the need arises we are prepared to extend Lab opening hours as needed.

4. The institute needs to ensure that the adequacy of resources (i.e. course materials, subscriptions, IT resources) is maintained and refreshed.

The course material is regularly updated on Moodle by each course instructor. The Library purchase material for courses (case studies, simulation games, databases etc.) as requested by faculty and needed by the students. A few recent examples include *Post-Covid Management - Roadmap for Business Recovery*, *Digital Marketing*, *Leading and Managing Change*, and so on. In terms of subscriptions, we are in contact with IEEE for journals and periodicals for the new programme, MSc in Applied Information Technologies.

5. There was an issue ordering the necessary hard copies of books and we commend joining the collective purchasing scheme. More investment is required in subscriptions to e-books and e-journals. Also, it is recommended to continue the investment in the library (electronic and physical) resources.

In addition to the above course related material and other instructional resources, the Library has its own enrichment plan with new acquisitions in support of the school's research efforts including requests coming from both faculty and students. In the last year, year and a half, some purchases were unfortunately delayed, due to the disruptions brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. The Cyprus Post Office had declared delays from practically all nations, including the United Kingdom. Almost all deliveries arrive in Cyprus via Amsterdam or Belgium and health supplies are prioritized. In order to access more publishers and sources, we have joined the Cyprus Libraries consortium, and we have requested that further academic databases be subscribed to. We also have an arrangement with the University of Cyprus that allows our students to utilize their library for study and research purposes. In response to the EEC recommendation we incorporated in our library acquisition plans subscriptions to more e-books and e-journals.

6. It would be good if the institute makes available space for group and individual study in addition to the current facilities in the classrooms and library.

The Library space has been extended with a large independent study area in another floor in which study desks and computers have been added. Analogous place has been made available in Limassol. Since there almost always empty classrooms, especially during the day which can and are often being used for individual and group study.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The CIIM has an international reputation for delivering targeted MBA and MSc courses for the past 30 years. There is both a national and international demand for taught MSc courses in Applied Information Technologies. The delivery style of sequential, intensive 2-week long modules of teaching, coursework and examination has been adapted from the MBA courses. The dual-campus model offers economy of scale and ensures that the students living and working in Limassol have access to postgraduate courses targeted at the working population who wish to upskill. These are some of the good reasons for delivering this new course.

However, the panel has also identified some deficiencies which once addressed will result in a course which will be in demand in Cyprus and in the eastern Mediterranean region.

1. The EEC recommends the creation of a *cabinet* which would oversee the effective delivery of the proposed programme. It is necessary to delegate responsibility and in so doing remove burden upon key resources like the Dean and also empowering and developing key managerial staff.
2. The *cabinet* would also be instrumental in ensuring the coherence of the study module-based program.
3. We would recommend that the importance of the individual project is recognised on the course and is given its due credit weightage.
4. The provision of a mandatory independent external examiner is necessary in order to provide oversight of the MSc programme. s


CIIM Response

1. We agree with the EEC that there is a need for such a Cabinet to delegate responsibility for overseeing the effective delivery of the programme thereby easing the burden “upon key resources like the Dean and also empowering and developing key managerial staff”. In response, we have created such a cabinet with the following composition and responsibilities:
 - a. Composition: Paris Cleanthous, Theodosios Mourouzis, Vicky Katsioloudes, Lena Jelic
 - b. Responsibilities: to oversee key School portfolios, including curriculum management, effective course delivery, examinations, research, external engagement, and regular programme/year review meetings,
 - c. Effective: immediately
2. The above Cabinet will also ensure the coherence of the study module-based programme, as recommended by the EEC.



3. Following the EEC recommendation, the individual research project, which was optional, has now been made mandatory and increased to 18 ECTS (see Annex 7 revised Curriculum) along the lines of the EEC recommendation. The Program Director and the programme's 8 faculty members will be serving as research project advisors and an external examiner will be assigned to each project.
4. We also agree with the EEC that an external examiner is necessary to provide oversight for the Programme in its entirety. In our case, the specialist from each subject area on CIIM's independent international Academic Council (see Annex 11), comprised of distinguished academics from top universities acts as the external examiner for the programmes related to his/her subject area. For the MSc in Applied Information Technologies, as well as the MSc in Business Intelligence and Data Analytics, Prof. Philip Treleaven, Professor of Computing at University College London and Director at the U.K. Centre for Financial Computing & Analytics of UCL, University of London (see Annex 12), provides the overall oversight.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Dr. Theodore Panayotou	Director and Dean	
Dr. Stathis Hadjidemetriou	Director of MSc AIT programme	
Dr. Theodosios Mourouzis	Co-Director of the MSc AIT programme and Director of the MSc BIDA programme	

Date: 03/06/2021

