Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 22/12/2021

External Evaluation Report

(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  American College

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School/Faculty

- **Department/ Sector:** Computer Science

- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

  In Greek:

  Δίπλωμα Τεχνικός Ηλεκτρονικών Υπολογιστών και Δικτύων

  In English:

  Computer and Network Technician (2 academic years/ 120 ECTS, Diploma)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English/Greek

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

- **Concentrations (if any):**

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

In Greek: Concentrations
In English: Concentrations

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A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) reviewed and examined the materials provided by the American College pertaining to the program 'Computer and Network Technician' (2 academic years/ 120 ECTS, Diploma). The program is currently operating and was previously evaluated and accredited by SEKAP.

The EEC had a preliminary remote meeting on 8.12.2021 to discuss the program evaluation process. A one-day site virtual visit was held on 10.12.2021. The EEC work was facilitated by digital collaborative tools for preparing for the site visit and the writing of the evaluation report.

The EEC was presented with detailed information about the College and the diploma programme. During the site visit, the EEC met representatives of the College, the leadership team for the programme, teaching and administration staff and students. Additional material and information was also requested during the visit and was provided.

Based on the examination and evaluation of the accreditation materials and the remote site visit, the EEC concludes that the required standards are met.

The present assessment report describes how the standards are met and provides recommendations and suggestions for improving the program under evaluation.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Prof. Giuseppe Di Fatta	Professor, Department of Computer Science	University of Reading, United Kingdom
Prof. Christina Lioma	Professor, Department of Computer Science	University of Copenhagen, Denmark
Prof. Zhiguo Ding	Professor, School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering	University of Manchester, United Kingdom
Mr. Michail Michail	Final year student, BSc Computer Science	University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*

- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
    (a) *sub-areas*
    (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
    (c) *some questions that EEC may find useful.*

- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*

- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*

- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*

- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development
   (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

> ### Sub-areas
>
> **1.1 Policy for quality assurance**
> **1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review**
> **1.3 Public information**
> **1.4 Information management**

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
    - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
    - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
    - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
    - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
    - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
    - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
    - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
    - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
    - *benefits from external expertise*
    - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
    - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
    - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
    - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*

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- *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
- *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
- *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*
  - *qualification awarded*
  - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *pass rates*
  - *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

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

The committee found that the evaluated programme, the two-year diploma in Computer and Network Technician, has been reasonably structured and delivered. In particular, the American College has a quality assurance policy in place and the instructions of the policy have been followed. For example, the programme has been evaluated regularly by the internal quality assurance committee. The structure of the programme is appropriate to its overall objectives. The courses of this programme have been well delivered by the teaching staff of the College.

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

The College has established a feedback mechanism, where students have the chance to feed their opinions and suggestions back to the College at the end of the term. The existence of such feedback ensures that the College is made aware of any potential issues of the teaching programme and hence makes some changes accordingly.

During the Covid pandemic, the College provided a good support to the students on the evaluated programme. For example, remote teaching was carried out via Zoom, when traditional face-to-face teaching was not feasible during the pandemic. Various online teaching materials, such as recorded lecture videos, have been made available to the students, which is evidently useful to student learning. The College has also built a dedicated lecture room for remote teaching, which is also useful to the staff for carrying out online teaching when required.

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

The College may want to formalize the process to approve the creation or changes to the programmes and courses, where written documents should be provided to keep track of the justifications for these actions and the specific added/changed content.

The College may also want to carry out more formalized moderation activities for the evaluated programme. For example, for the exam papers, it will be useful to carry out internal/external moderation in order to avoid any simple typos and ambiguous exam questions. If possible, moderation towards the students' marks should be also carried out.

Furthermore, the college needs to carry out a thorough review to the programme structure for a balanced coverage in some topics. For example, there is currently not sufficient coverage for Linux and Unix shell scripting, although the students informed the committee of the desire to gain more knowledge towards this topic. Another example is that teaching activities on Excel and PowerPoint might be unnecessarily associated with credits on this programme. The programme contains an elective course on Excel spreadsheets (6 ECTS) and an elective course on Powerpoint presentations (6 ECTS points). The number of ECTS points for each of these courses is too high. Unfortunately, despite the EEC requesting information on the design of these courses, the college could not provide information on the rationale behind these courses, or how they were designed more generally.

Feedback is another aspect the College can improve. For example, explicit written feedback on assessed coursework will be very useful to students.

There are no staff-student meetings at the college as part of this programme. The student body is represented in various committees by student representatives, which are chosen by the college and not elected by the student body itself. This point should be addressed. Both staff-student meetings and elected student representatives by the student body directly are standard practices.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

> **Sub-areas**
> **2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
> **2.2 Practical training**
> **2.3 Student assessment**

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*

- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

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

The teaching methods appear conventional. All modules announced in the online semester schedule were based on 1 hour teaching blocks. This seems good in order to maintain the good level of students' attention.

The systematic use of a Moodle platform is appreciated.

It does not appear that any visiting lectures are held by, for instance, industrial speakers or external academics, in order to diversify the teaching approach.

The fact that class sizes are quite small provides a base for a more personalised learning experience.

The programme does not appear to offer internships or stays outside the College.

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

There is a (small) nucleus of mostly young teachers competent in Computer Science.

Class sizes are small, this helps the interactions among students and between students and teachers.

The usage of Moodle for storing teaching material is good practice.

The use of the Plagium plagiarism tool is good practice.

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.

It is not clear to the EEC whether advanced or innovative teaching methods are used in this programme. The EEC could not find evidence of explicitly student-centered teaching delivery. In relation to this, it would be a good idea to include small group-based exercises during lectures, to increase student engagement and digestion of the teaching material.

In order to align the programme with international HE standards and similar programmes, the EEC recommends the implementation of a strategy for introducing best practices, such as didactic training for staff, a standard approach to assessment criteria, more innovative teaching and assessment methods, linking teaching and assessment to real-world problems.

The EEC recommends inviting some experts from outside the College to talk about the jobs and careers available in the sector to help students to mature an autonomous view of their future profession.

There is no exam script moderation prior to the exams. A few randomly selected exam papers are checked by senior management after the conclusion of the exams. Moderation of the exam material prior to the exam is highly recommended.

A policy to provide written feedback along with the assessment should be introduced for coursework.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Partially compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

    3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development
    3.2 Teaching staff number and status
    3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

Findings

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

The cohort of teaching staff consists of 4 full-time lecturers and 3 part-time lecturers. Currently, the programme is delivered to a modest number of students.

The panel discussed with current lecturing staff on various issues of staff training and development. From the conversation, it seems that there is a lack of understanding, for instance, about personal development and promotion criteria. The College documentation on the promotion process should be more detailed, particularly on the criteria for promotion. They should cover teaching, research, admin and leadership, professional development and international esteem.

The normal teaching load of 12 hours (delivery) for lecturers is relatively high, considering normally twice as much time is needed to prepare the delivery, marking, and dealing with student enquiries.

The EEC has seen no clear evidence to suggest that regular professional and teaching focused training have taken place.

Documentation supplied by the College shows that teaching evaluation is in place and student feedback is taken into account in assessing teaching quality.

In the meeting with the panel, the lecturing staff seemed positive about teaching and engaged in it.

From the discussion, there seems to be limited support for developing research grant proposals both in terms of central service and time allocation.

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

Current staff is motivated, dedicated and possesses the right qualifications for the specific programme.

The two students met by the EEC provided positive feedback on the teaching quality and the level of support received from the teaching staff.

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.

Given that the current number of students on this programme is modest, the number of staff in the department seems to be adequate, i.e. 4 full time and 3 part time. However, it does mean that each lecturing staff needs to deliver many courses for this programme. This poses a very high demand on specialized knowledge for each lecturer and on their workload. However, a sustainable solution to this issue would be increasing the number of applications and consequently enrolments. From the conversation with current lecturing staff, it is apparent that members of staff are not very clear on promotion requirements. The documentation provided on promotion is inadequate. Management should formalise career pathways and promotion criteria better and communicate them to staff. Staff performance evaluation should have the aim to empower staff and enable staff to perform. The career pathway is unclear in several respects. It should provide necessary details on all key aspects, including teaching, research, administration and leadership, professional development, and international esteem. It also should include criteria for each aspect and specification on required evidence. Promotion to senior positions should also include independent external assessment.   It is not clear if students receive feedback with their grades as a standard practice, and if so, in what format. The college staff informed us that all students receive written feedback with their grades. The students we interviewed informed us that they receive no written feedback with their grades. Feedback is discussed orally in the class. Feedback should be written and should be private to each student. This should be standard practice for all courses in the program.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Partially compliant

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

> ## Sub-areas
> **4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria**
> **4.2 Student progression**
> **4.3 Student recognition**
> **4.4 Student certification**

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

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

The admission requirements for the study programme are a secondary school leaving certificate (or equivalent) and a certificate of English language proficiency (e.g., IELTS 5.0).

In general, these requirements are appropriate and in line with the strategic aim of the programme.

However, the use of the English language in the programme is limited: all technical courses are currently taught in Greek.

The purpose of the English language certificate as an admission requirement is not clear and could be reconsidered, unless a plan to deliver some of the courses in English is made.

The low number of students in the programme suggests that there may be a need to review and reconsider the general aim of the programme and the marketing strategy to attract applicants. For example, from the extra material requested by the EEC the tight link between the programme and several industrial certifications became evident. It is not clear if and how this information is available to prospective applicants.

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

The low number of students and low number of teaching staff in the program creates an environment where personal relationships can flourish and where students can be in direct contact with their instructors easily.

There is a strong link between the programme and at least 7 certifications from industry (CISCO, Microsoft, etc.).

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

The teaching, learning and assessment procedures related to options after failing an exam, and the number and conditions for re-examination or repetition of a course are not readily accessible. They are not included in the Students Orientation Handbook. The EEC could not readily access this information in any of the written documentation provided, nor on the website of the College. The website of the College provides very little information about how a student can request a re-examination, but no information on the options after failing an exam, and the number of re-examination or repetition of the course allowed. The College representatives informed the EEC that students who fail a course must repeat the course, unless medical reasons are provided that justify failing the exam (in that case a re-exam can be arranged). The College representatives also informed the EEC that a course can be repeated twice maximum. This is very important information that needs to be formalised, written down and made readily accessible to everyone, at least on the Students Orientation Handbook and possibly on the College website. The EEC also notes that when a student fails a course and has to repeat the course, the student has to wait until the course is offered again. This can create delays and complications in the progression of the student across the programme, for instance when the failed course is a prerequisite for further compulsory courses in the upcoming semester. The EEC recommends that all students who fail a course have the opportunity to take a re-exam without having to repeat the course. This is in line with international standards, and it also facilitates the smooth progression of students across the programme.

The English language certificate as an admission requirement should be reviewed or a plan to deliver some of the technical courses in English should be made.

The strong link between the programme and the industrial certifications could be exploited better to attract more applicants. This opportunity should also be promoted to the students, who should be explicitly supported to gain at least one or two certifications of the several they could take.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Partially compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

Sub-areas

    5.1 Teaching and Learning resources
    5.2 Physical resources
    5.3 Human support resources
    5.4 Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

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

The programme is supported by four computer laboratories - all running the Windows operating system - and a computer network laboratory. There is no computer laboratory running Linux operating system. There are 14 classrooms equipped with a PC for the instructor, a projector and a projector screen. The American College subscribes to online learning resources which include online books and journals where the students have access twenty-four hours a day via the Internet. As in the documentation provided, a distance Learning platform is available for synchronous and asynchronous teaching.

The students confirmed in the meeting with the EEC that they are satisfied by the college's policies and mechanisms for communication with the faculty and admin staff. The College has a procedure for students evaluating facilities and services.

The human support to the program, like student counselling, student advisors and student affairs seems sufficient in number.

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

The two students interviewed by the EEC stated that they have good lecturers and that they provide feedback through a specific evaluation procedure. They are happy with the College and the programme.

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

The students interviewed by the EEC found some of the computational equipment of the programme outdated, such as the laptops they use for practice in their practical sessions.

Students are given no storage, no VPN, no online account, no College email. Outside the College, they have no access to important resources, such as Windows 365. Outside the premises of the College, students have no access to library facilities (no access to eBooks, online curricula, scientific subscriptions).

In the labs, there is one account shared by all students. Having a common account for all is not a good practice, nor a standard practice. The EEC highly recommends revising and improving this aspect.

The College has a Career Service that, according to the College documentation, puts students in contact with employers, that helps students to write a CV, and that helps students prepare for interviews. However, it seems that there is little or no demand for these services from the students. It is recommended that the Career Service proactively seeks out the students to promote and offer these services. Another improvement could be to collect and store student CVs on a database, so that employers can search this database.

The EEC did not see evidence that student mobility is supported within and across higher education systems.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Non-compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

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6. **Additional for doctoral programmes** *(ALL ESG)*

> <u>**Sub-areas**</u>
> **6.1 Selection criteria and requirements**
> **6.2 Proposal and dissertation**
> **6.3 Supervision and committees**

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

<u>Standards</u>
- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
    - *the stages of completion*
    - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
    - *the examinations*
    - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
    - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

<u>Standards</u>
- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
    - *the chapters that are contained*
    - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
    - *the minimum word limit*
    - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

6.3 Supervision and committees

<u>Standards</u>
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
    - *regular meetings*

- o *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - o *support for writing research papers*
  - o *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?*

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.

NA

Strengths

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

NA

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.

NA

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Not applicable
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Not applicable
6.3	Supervision and committees	Not applicable

D. Conclusions and final remarks

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

The EEC reviewed and examined the materials provided by the American College related to the diploma programme under evaluation. The one-day site virtual visit was held on 10.12.2021.

The EEC was presented with detailed information about the degree programme. During the site visit, the EEC met the college representatives, the programme director, the academic and administration staff. It also met two students, one from each year of the programme. Additional material was provided to the EEC and was included in the evaluation.

Based on the examination and evaluation of the accreditation materials and the remote site visit, the EEC concludes that the required standards are met.

The EEC identified a number of key strengths that could make the programme more successful in attracting applicants. The industry-oriented training of the programme is suitable to provide valuable graduates to the industry of the sector. This aspect should be better presented in the website and in the marketing material. Overall, the programme has a consistent design with clear aim and objectives to meet job market demands. The level of support available to the students is good. The quality of the technical infrastructure can and should be improved.

The EEC also identified a number of key areas for improvement and therefore, the following recommendations are made:

- A formal process to approve the creation and changes to programmes and courses with written documents as record should be introduced.
- An internal and/or external formal moderation process of the assessment material (coursework and exams) as well as for the exam marking should be introduced.
- A review to the programme structure should be carried out to deliver a balanced coverage of some topics such as Linux and Unix shell scripting, Excel and PowerPoint.
- A standard policy for written feedback to assessment elements to be provided to the students should be introduced.
- Regular and formal staff-student meetings should be introduced.
- Student representatives should be elected by the student body directly.
- A general process to support and expand best practices in Teaching&Learning with didactic training for staff should be introduced.
- Career pathway and promotion criteria should be better defined and communicated to staff members.
- The English language certificate as an admission requirement should be reviewed or a plan to deliver some of the technical courses in English should be made.
- The strong link between the programme and the industrial certifications could be exploited better to attract more applicants. At the same time, the College should make an explicit plan and investment to support and promote this opportunity to the students.

- The Teaching&Learning and assessment procedures related to retaking exams and the repetition of a course should be made readily accessible to the students. The EEC recommends that all students who fail a course have the opportunity to retake the exam at least once without having to repeat the course.
- The IT and computing infrastructure requires some improvements and an investment in this area may significantly improve the student experience.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Prof. Giuseppe Di Fatta	
Prof. Christina Lioma	
Prof. Zhiguo Ding	
Mr. Michail Michail	

Date: 22/12/2021