Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 13-5-2022

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: Business**

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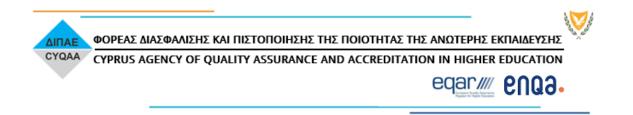
  In Greek:

  Programme Name

  In English:

  Accounting Officer(2 years.120 ECTS, Diploma)

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

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

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the remote visit.

Following the invitation by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) has evaluated the Diploma programme of study entitled Accounting Officer, which is a currently operating programme from the American College (hereafter AC) since 2015 in Nicosia (Cyprus).

The EEC consisted of four academics: Professor and Chair Dimitrios Kousenidis (Aristotle University of Salonica, Greece), the members Professor Hans van der Heijden (University of Sussex Business School), Professor Dionisis Philippas (ESSCA School of Management), and the student member Mr George Aristotelous (Technological University of Cyprus).

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the evaluation for the programme took place online on the 6th of May, 2022. Prior to the visit, (but also after the visit) the EEC was supplied with a comprehensive internal evaluation report and other relevant documentation, as well as all the presentations that were presented during the day of the online visit. The agenda included several meetings with the senior management, teaching faculty, students and administrative personnel.
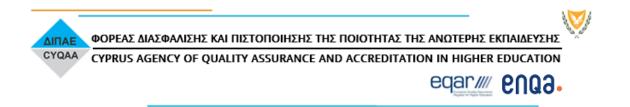
In particular, during the online visit, the EEC met: the Head of the Institution Dr Marios Amerikanos, the Director of Academic Affairs Dr Andreas Petasis, the Chair of Internal Quality Assurance Committee and Head of the Department Dr Charalambos Louca, a number (8) of permanent and adjunct faculty responsible for the delivery of the Diploma (QA session), 4 students, and the administrative personnel: the Director of Admissions Mr Tasos Anastasiou, the IT Officer Mr Sakis Papalexiou and the Director of Administration Mr Fotis Michael.

In the morning session, the senior management team presented the College and the programme under review. Later, the EEC met the teaching staff, the students and, finally the administrative personnel. The discussion covered the programme under review, its structure, academic issues related to the programme, staff workload and organization, assessments, and resources. During the session with students, the EEC met with students who shared their experiences in AC. The last sessions were the meetings with members of the administrative team as well as the concluding remarks with the senior management. After the presentations in each session, the EEC had the opportunity to ask questions and collect further information. More specifically, the EEC asked questions related to the programme (e.g., learning objectives (LO), programme's structure, delivery methods, assurance of learning (AoL), quality of learning (QoL), infrastructure and IT support, etc.). Additional evidence was also provided later (e.g., exam papers, assignments, assessments, and so on).

The EEC evaluation and the findings and recommendations of this report were based on the meetings conducted, the evidence provided, and the additional information requested by the EEC during the visit.

The report discusses in detail areas of strength and areas that further work may be required.

The EEC members found the discussions to be fruitful and informative. The EEC provides some constructive suggestions as to how American College could address the points raised.

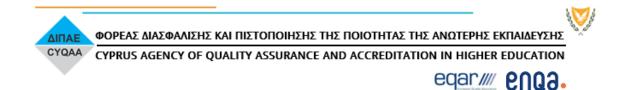The EEC would like to thank all parties involved for their cooperation and support during the online evaluation. The committee would also like to express its gratitude to Mrs. Emily Alexandridou, the CYQAA coordinator, for her efficient way of managing the process.

If the College or the CYQAA have any queries with regards to the report, the EEC members will be more than happy to attend to them in due course.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Dimitrios Kousenidis	Professor	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
Hans van der Heijden	Professor	University of Sussex Business School, UK
Dionisis Philippas	Professor	ESSCA School of Management, France
George Aristotelous	Student representative	Technological University of Cyprus, Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

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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 remote visit.
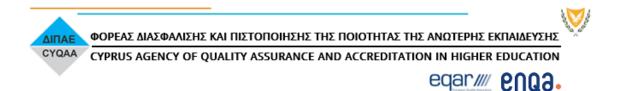
Strengths

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*

- o *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
- o *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
- o *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*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *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*
- o *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*
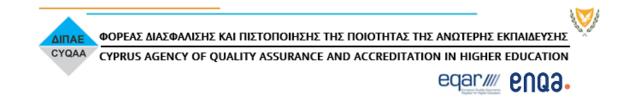
1.3 Public information

Standards

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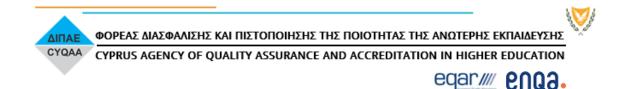
1.4 Information management

Standards

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

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 remote visit.

The EEC was provided with information regarding the entry criteria, the programme's learning outcomes, the delivery of modules, and the assessment procedures, as demonstrated by the members of the AC. The EEC found the admission criteria to be adequate and in line with those required from the Cyprus authority. The programme appears to recruit reasonably well. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds.

The programme spans 2 years and expects students to undertake and successfully complete 120 ECTS (12 core and 2 electives among them with 6 or 12 - by case- ECTS). The proposed structure initially offers a reasonable balance between the number of modules and associated ECTS between the accounting modules and those related to IT.

The language is Greek and English. Each semester contains 4 core (or later also 2 electives) courses. The duration of each semester is 12 weeks. The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear and adequate, and are clearly communicated to the students. The assessment of each course contains a 50% written final exams and 50% course work along with mid-term exam.

The intended learning outcomes are in line with expectations for such a program, aiming to cover both the knowledge and skills that graduates should possess in order to find a relevant to the course job. The EEC enquired about the career path of graduates and their potential employability challenges.

Evidence of extensive quality assurance procedures, as part of an ongoing review and development, were provided by the AC. The Quality Assurance mechanisms are present, and they are well-aligned with international standards. The EEC identified that there are policies and procedures in place that aim to ensure the quality of the new and established/revised programmes.

The AC has provided evidence of international collaborations with Greek universities and international organisations as well as its participation to international educational programmes (e.g., UN, Erasmus, etc.) which can provide significant contributions to the quality of the program.

The EEC believes that the currently operating Diploma provides a good platform on which to further improve the programme.

Finally, the AC showed evidence about its close links with local society.

Strengths

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

The EEC believes that the existing programme is in a good state and can be revised in a way that results in an even better learning offering.

The existing programme offers a wide range of modules that cover the expected areas sufficiently. These provide the necessary background knowledge and skills students will require in order to secure jobs in their respective field of accounting.

Assessment is in line with expectations, featuring both exams and coursework for each module. These are operationalised within the framework set by Cypriot Ministry of Education with regards to assessment.

The faculty members teaching on this programme are qualified individuals with relevant expertise and sufficient years of teaching experience who meet the expectations of the programme.

It was positive to see that many of those teaching on the programme were early-career professionals employed both on a full-time and part-time basis. This can make it possible to ensure continuity and coherence of service.

Additionally, some strengths of the programme are as follows:

1. An elaborate quality assurance system is in place.

2. Management, faculty and administrative staff appear committed to the planning of the programme.

3. The ties with local society and business sector.

4. External examiners and advisor(s) contribute to the programme.

5. The QA contains both academics and students and it is separate from administrative members. Revisions are made (if needed) every two years following suggestions and any discontinuities that have been noticed during the academic year.

6. Feedbacks and evaluations forms for the programme and teaching staff are in line with the common practice where students are also involved.

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 believes that AC management team alongside with the teaching staff should consider ways with which the programme's design, structure, and delivery can be improved. The suggestions below can inform this process, resulting in a clearer learning offering and hopefully a sustainable programme when it comes to student recruitment.
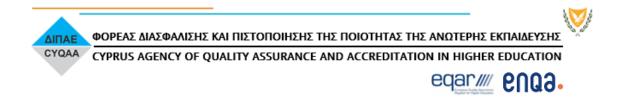
1. Although the programme has clear LO and outcomes, it is not made explicitly clear how these LO are mapped to the modules offered; thus, it would be useful to have these LO mapped against the modules currently on offer. This would make the structure of the programme better in many ways. To give an example, there are syllabi for some courses which disregard continuity of coverage, or sometimes do not connect to syllabi of other modules of the programme, e.g., financial mathematics content vs. Accounting I content, or/and English writing and Communication. The progression from one stage/term to the next and the interconnection among the modules is not clear. A clearer mapping as to how students progress through the programme (e.g. from the early introductory modules to the later more advanced ones) would be useful. A more compact structure followed by changes in syllabi over the semesters would make it possible to explicitly demonstrate that the programme meets its objectives. It may also make it possible to identify areas that knowledge development and skills practicing have not been developed sufficiently. In turn, the programme team can address them in future revisions of the program.

2. Similarly, with respect to the programme's objectives, it would be useful to see that the programme team establishes a programme level assessment strategy. Teaching staff did mention that there were no significant changes to syllabi and assessment the last 2 years. However, the EEC agrees that a good practice

would be that the AC follows a more systematic approach towards recent developments and business world updates that would be beneficial to the programme and the student learning experience.

3. The EEC notes that a disproportionally large number of English modules are offered throughout the programme, coming with two main pitfalls: (i) they are joint courses with other programmes of study; (ii) they do not cover accounting and computerised accounting terminology (tailored to the programme's needs), instead they focus on learning the English language more generally. The EEC agrees that English language is important for accounting officers to deal with international financial reporting standards and international clients; however, this is only partially covered in the offered English modules. A suggestion would be to unlink/remove the ECTS earned by the English modules offered and replace them with more electives related to the core aim of the programme (i.e., accounting). These courses can give a competitive advantage to the programme and could include: principles of business, sustainability in accounting, ethics in accounting, environmental, social and governance reporting (ESG), and so on.

4. Although the module outline forms sufficiently touched on the areas covered by the modules, these often appeared to be rather generic. It would be useful to review the module outline forms (and likely the content of the modules) to ensure that they meet the necessary foundational knowledge and skills required in each area and that they do not invest in covering aspects that are not as important or overlap other sections from other modules. While doing so, it would be useful to review reading lists and textbooks and update them with more recent ones, where possible.

5. Accounting practices and policies are continuously in development worldwide, and therefore a revision of the programme, its content and its policies, should be considered more frequently by the AC senior management and not every two years.

6. The EEC believes that the choice for the selected accounting and payroll software used in the accounting labs, should be reviewed. According to the EEC's understanding, the software could not be provided to the students during the pandemic at home for practice and coursework (i.e. using a cloud licence) and could only be used on-premise. Only recently a technical solution for this issue has been offered.

7. The EEC believes that the programme should provide additional computer skills in relation to accounting using a variety of different tools, from advanced Excel features to even more sophisticated software in the area of data science and data visualisation.

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	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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.*
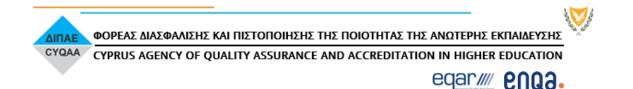
2.2 Practical training

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.*

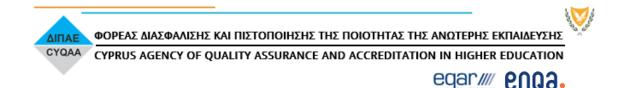### 2.3 Student assessment

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 remote visit.

There are comprehensive teaching methodologies and mechanisms. It appears that AC has given appropriate consideration to the overall teaching and learning design and delivery of the proposed programme. The programme is built with student needs in mind. Overall, the educational process comes across as well-structured, effective and well-implemented.

A proper quality assurance and performance evaluation system is in place. The internal quality assurance infrastructure and processes seem to be effective. The quality assurance of the programme to be accredited is ensured through the planned active participation of the teaching staff.

The criteria for student assessment are diverse and follow international standards. The EEC reviewed the uploaded examples (sample exams and coursework material) that demonstrated a pedagogically valid approach to design an assessment with good guidance about selection of information sources to support student narrative. The EEC supports the in-person exams (where possible) that AC follows as practice, even due to Covid-19 outbreak.

The EEC met 4 students. They were particularly satisfied and pleased with their studies. Both students and teaching staff noted that the close relationship is built between them, affecting their studies positively. The students have commented that the faculty members are accessible and helpful. A shared positive view was the assistance and good communication students have had with the teaching staff especially during Covid restrictions.

The students mentioned that a main reason (among others) to choose this programme (and AC) was the fees and flexibility in delivering of the courses. They also mentioned the support of AC to career paths when seeking new job, and they feel stronger in positioning themselves in the job market through this programme.

The students have expressed their gratitude towards the availability of the AC staff as everyone was open to communication. When there was space for improvement the staff were there to assist and provide extra support.

However, the students raised two main issues to be considered by the AC in the future: (i) the IT courses, labs, software provided for practice, and training through this programme should be upgraded, re-evaluated and reformed; (ii) the English courses which form a disproportionly large part of the programme.
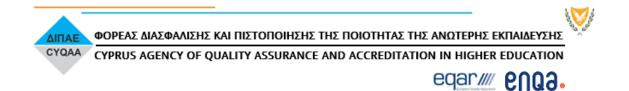
Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Overall, the programme compares positively with relevant programmes offered in Cyprus. The EEC believes that the suggestions provided in this report can help the programme to be more competitive in the local market.

The EEC feels that the programme is managed by the staff in charge and there are no inappropriate non-academic interventions. The programme supports a friendly environment between students and teaching/ administrative staff.

The students interviewed by the Committee highlighted they are satisfied with the quality of the program. They have also indicated that communication with AC members during the studies, and the administrative team is open and part of the culture of the staff.
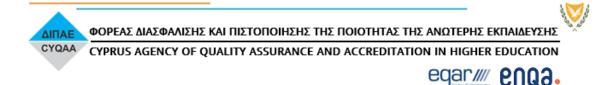
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Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The programme should benefit by taking into account the continuous development in accounting education and the professional market, in terms of computational practices in accounting, modules orientated towards business, sustainability and ethics and, most important to provide a variety of practical toolboxes both remotely and in campus, in order to enhance students' ability to work and practice on relevant issues and coursework.

The EEC suggests considering increasing where possible the level of practical training with business sector, small companies or relevant stakeholders in Cyprus. Since the connection of AC with the local society and business sector is strong, along with the societal issues relevant to such actors, this can lead to new sources of funding and internships where students can work or have an internship on higher level with the companies or organisations in the specialties of the students.

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	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 remote visit.

The EEC noted that the programme is supported by a well-qualified faculty. The EEC also observed that members of staff have years of experience in their field, as well as teaching experience.

Overall, there is a good fit between the teaching team's qualifications and expertise with the course units they deliver.
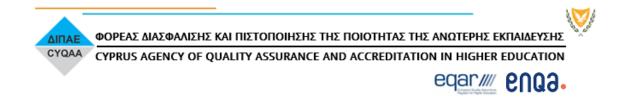
During the virtual visit, the teaching staff was praised by students for both the quality of teaching and the level of support received.

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

The EEC notes that:

1. The faculty members involved in the programme appear to be committed to the programme.
2. The specialization fields of the faculty members are reflected on the content of the programme and in their teaching roles.
3. Teaching outcomes are monitored and reviewed by the AoQ and College's committees.
4. The teaching staff has also external activities which enrich their teaching portfolios in terms of case studies and real-life examples.

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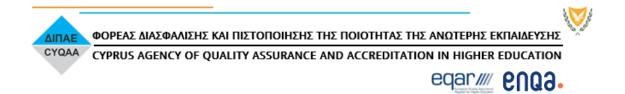CYQAA CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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5. The teaching staff is well trained (especially during the Covid era) to new IT methods of delivering material and teaching, as well as to remotely communicate with the students.
6. The workload is balanced as mentioned in the online meeting.

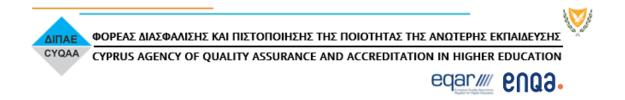## Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

There is a good fit between the faculty team's qualifications and expertise with the course units they deliver. However, the EEC believes that there should be a clearer activity menu that leads to course development and programme's development. This would also lead to a more intensive course development by the teaching staff as well as enrich case studies and better structure the syllabi and modules (avoiding overlaps). The programme should make an effort to draw upon staff suggestions on course development and vice versa. However, participation does not seem to be clear and sufficient. Neither is it entirely clear how this is reflected on staff workload.

It is not entirely clear how staff assessment and outcome deliverables are actioned. The substance of staff assessments is not entirely clear in terms of the action taken, to further contribute as an overall assessment of the whole programme. Moreover, it is not made explicit how improvements are implemented.

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	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

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

<u>**Sub-areas**</u>
   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

<u>*Standards*</u>

- *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

<u>*Standards*</u>

- *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

<u>*Standards*</u>

- *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 remote visit.

The EEC discussed with 4 students their experience at the College. The students were at different stages of their studies.

The students appear to be supported by the AC in terms of teaching materials, personal tutoring, IT support, and library access in existing programmes.

The students were open in expressing great satisfaction with the College. The main reason to join the College was the affordability of its programmes as well as positive assessments they have acquired from their networks. The College appears to be student–oriented with close interactions between students and faculty.
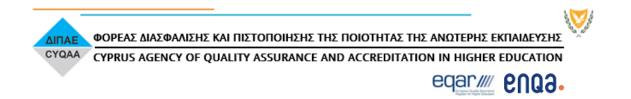
Overall, the students were satisfied with the programme and with the services offered by the College.

Admission criteria are on par with other Colleges in Cyprus offering similar programmes.

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

1. The College is student oriented.

2. There is a very good admission and administrative team.

3. The students are well supported in the context of their modules. This is due to individual feedback by the teaching staff (an advantage of a small program).
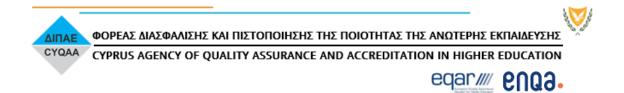
4. There is an evaluation by students of the learning experience. Students are represented in committees such as the one on quality assurance. This makes it possible for student voices to be heard and taken into consideration in a structured manner.

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.

No main comments at this point. However, the remarks raised above about the programme in overall would benefit this section as well, an issue that was also mentioned by the students.

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	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.).*

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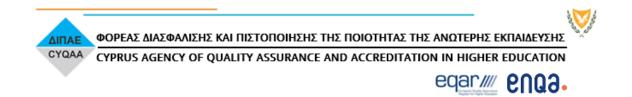
5.4 Student support

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 remote visit.

The material provided with regards to the College's building that the EEC had access to before the evaluation, together with the interviews we conducted lead us to conclude that the College offers adequate resources to both students and faculty including access to library material, IT infrastructure and administrative support.

The library appears well-equipped. Our overall impression is that all resources are in place and fully functional.

In terms of human capital support, the College is performing well on that front as faculty appear to be provided with the necessary support in order to fulfil their teaching duties.

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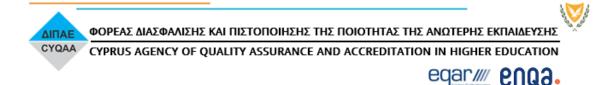*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

Both faculty and students noted they were provided with adequate resources to perform what is expected of them. Indeed, the students appear quite happy with the services they receive in terms of the lounge, the library and the College overall.

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.

That said, and in the spirit of further improvement, the College should consider upgrade the remote systems for students, the relevant software for this programme, cloud-based access, and may also join additional Cyprus/world-wide networks of university libraries to secure access to additional material.

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	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements
6.2 Proposal and dissertation
6.3 Supervision and committees

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards
- *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*
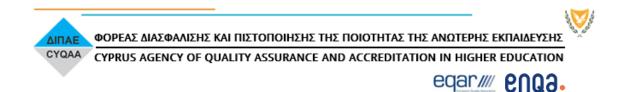
6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards
- *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

Standards
- *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 remote visit.

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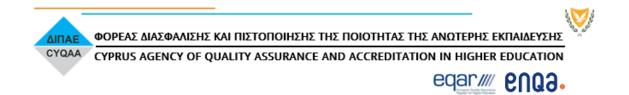*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

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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.

Click or tap here to enter text.

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 appreciates the significant progress that has been made on programmes at AC, including drawing upon external expertise, quality assessments and programme structure consistent with comparable programmes. This is the first evaluation under the supervision of Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.
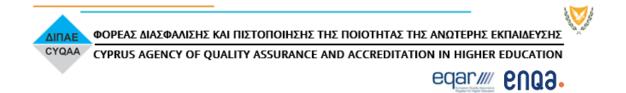
The EEC welcomes the programme as it holds the potential of allowing the College to promote its programmes and reputation. It also provides an opportunity to foster collaboration with local business in an area that is continuously growing but also facing new challenges.

As with any programme, there is also space for improvement. Indeed, we have identified some areas where we see that further development is recommended. We have elaborated on those in each section above. We expect that the programme will be supported in these areas.

We also recommend AC to promote the programme to the local market, and if possible, both to professionals and graduates; therefore, the AC should probably enhance the marketing campaign with regards to this programme.

The EEC would like to take this opportunity to thank the CYQAA coordinator (Emily Alexandridou) for managing the process both efficiently and effectively. Her facilitation has been exemplar and has make it possible for the evaluation to run smoothly.

Finally, once more, should the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education require any clarifications with regards to the points raised in the report, the EEC remains at the Agency's disposal.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	*Signature*
Dimitrios Kousenidis	
Hans van der Heijden	
Dionisis Philippas	
George Aristotelous	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 13-5-2022