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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Doc. 300.1.1

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report

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

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  The Cyprus Institute of Marketing

- **Town: Limassol**

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

- **Department/ Sector:** Department/Sector

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

  In Greek:

  ΔΙΟΙΚΗΣΗ ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΕΩΝ ΜΕ ΝΑΥΤΙΛΙΑΚΑ
  In English:
  MBA with Shipping

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

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

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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

A. Introduction

The external evaluation of the MBA with Shipping postgraduate program of the Cyprus Institute of Marketing (CIM) has been contacted within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (CYQAA) in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the "Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 to 2019

Due to the exceptional times the external evaluation activities were performed online, in line with the Law approved by the Cyprus House of Representatives on 2 June 2020.

The online external evaluation and virtual site visits at programmatic and departmental level, were carried out by an External Evaluation Committees (EECs), including three external experts (Professors at Higher Education Institution in the U.K., Netherlands and Greece respectively) and a student from a public University in Cyprus.

The virtual site visits and the interviews with stakeholders were performed on 6 September 2021.
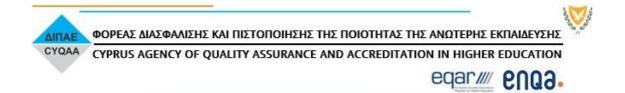
Based on the Department's application for evaluation and the remote/virtual site visit conducted, the EEC completed the external evaluation report the period 7-10 September 2021.

The Committee visit included meetings with the various stakeholders (Head of the Institution under evaluation, faculty members, directors of the educational program, administrative staff, students and alumni).

The process respected all confidentiality protocols. Along with the study and discussion of the related submitted applications of the Institution, these meetings provided the means to evaluate the MBA with Shipping course that it offers.
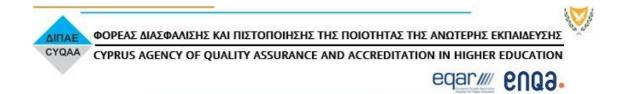
The attendance of the meetings was satisfactory in all respects, with all members of the Faculty and Administrative staff taking part in the briefing of the EEC members.

The preparation and effective execution of the process were fully supported by Mr. Constantinos Constantinou, Education Officer, CYQAA.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Prof Athanasios Pallis (Chair)	Professor of Port Management and Shipping	Department of Port Management & Shipping, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Prof. Nikos Nomikos	Professor of Shipping Finance	Centre for Shipping Trade and Finance, Bayes Business School (formerly Cass), City, University of London
Prof. Albert Veenstra	Professor of Trade and Logistics	Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam
Crystaleni Tryfonos	Student representative	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

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.

Quality Assurance

CIM has an elaborate half-yearly review process in place, in which the courses and teachers are reviewed, among others, by the students. These reviews are discussed with the internal review body, in which a student representative also sits. All regular procedures and safeguards for quality assurance are found to be in place.

Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

The program is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with institutional strategy. Students, staff and other stakeholders are involved in the design of the programme as a whole, and of individual courses.

The design of the programme is based around some major core courses each worth 12 ECTS. The material presented to the evaluation panel did not allow the review of the actual workload for students. The programme is periodically reviewed, which results in adaptations of the programme.

Public Information

Relevant information on the program is available, especially for prospected students. Some of this information was presented and discussed with the review committee. Other information (for instance on pass rates, as well as teaching, learning and assessment procedures) is deemed to be present upon questions, but was not presented to the committee.

Information management

Information on management of the program is collected, monitored and analysed. This information was not presented to the committee, but was mentioned upon questioning.

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

The committee finds that an elaborate quality assurance process is conducted with students, staff and stakeholders. As a result, the programme is appreciated by both students and stakeholders. The committee also finds that the management of the institute is quite responsive to criticism and suggestions for changes to the program. A number of significant changes were made as a result of the last accreditation review.
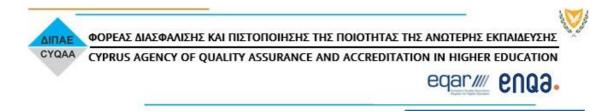
Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The committee finds that

- The information presented to the committee could have been more detailed in terms of the program and student related statistics. The committee would have appreciated a more extensive and specific analysis of student intake, progression, drop out rates, outcomes of the student evaluations of the programme, and so on.
- There does not seem to be an institutional procedure for teaching, learning and assessment that ensures standardisation of practices across the program. As a result, the definition of the courses, the approach towards formulation of the learning objectives and the assessment approach differs from course to course.

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	Partially compliant
1.4	Information management	Partially compliant

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

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

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

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.

Process of teaching and learning

The committee finds that the way the material on the programme and courses is presented does not provide a complete description of the actual teaching activities. The material creates the suggestion that the main teaching method is straight-up teaching. Even though the discussion with staff gave some more insight in the actual teaching activities (case studies, etc), the course descriptions do not give background information on this (what cases are used, which guest lecturers are involved, which company visits are considered, what part of the group work is assessed and graded and so on).

The committee also appreciates the individual tutoring procedure CIM has in place for every student. This tutor also plays a role in any problem the student may encounter.

Practical training

The program on the whole does a good job in preparing the students for the next step in their career in the shipping business. The students we spoke to were all very positive about the networking opportunities, contacts with the Cyprus maritime business community and so on. The dissertation topic, that for most students comes from their business practice, supports this.

Student assessment

Student assessment is present in each course. Regular assessment types such as group work, individual and group assignments, exams and a dissertation are appropriate for this type of program. It is clear how assessment is conducted for each course, and criteria for pass or fail in most cases are clear as well. An appeals procedure is found to be in place.

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

The commitment of CIM to connect business with the students and the other way around is clearly a strong point of this program. The institute provides a good context for business related education, with sound

organisation of the various procedural and organizational components that an academic institution should have. In particular the institute's IT environment leaves little to be desired.

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 committee finds that:

- The current program under the title 'MBA with Shipping' does not feel like an actual MBA programme, and has a shipping specialisation that is rather generic and perfunctory. A large part of the extensive course on research methods (12 ECTS) and an 18 ECTS dissertation shifts the focus of this program very much to a promise of research that fits better in an MSC program. Our recommendation would be to redesign this program to bring it more in line with specialist MBA programs. Such a program could include a dissertation only as a non-compulsory element. This dissertation could then better be called a company project report.
- The course descriptions presented to the committee do not provide a sufficiently accurate picture of the actual teaching approach to assess if the teaching at CIM is sufficiently student-centred, modern and effective. In particular, the committee would have liked to see more information on group work, extra-curricular activities that are part of the courses (how many company visits, which companies, what is discussed during these visits), case work (which cases, how much time is spent on in-class discussion, how are student dissertations used to create new cases for the class room).
- The committee finds the current design of the courses illogical. In some cases, the course of 12 ECTS clearly consists of two components that are unrelated and could just as well be separated into two 6 ECTS courses. While this design may have been a direct result of a previous accreditation review, the committee feels the programme management should come up with a clear vision of its own and design the programme and courses accordingly.
- The committee could not evaluate the calculation of ECTS per course with the actual student load. It seems that in some cases (maritime economics for 6 ECTS, for instance) the work load is on the light side.
- The dissertation, as it is, requires the students to produce a document with a minimum of 10000 words. This translates into about 15-20 pages A4 with normal font. In practice, these dissertations will be longer (as was the example thesis sent to the committee), but for 18 ECTS of work load, this is not a high requirement. It would be better to make the dissertation a company project report with a proper, but not heavy research oriented, academic assessment (clear methodology and investigative goals, literature review, proper referencing, analytical approach to the topic – qualitative or quantitative -, and proper conclusions and analyse based conclusions).

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	Partially compliant

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3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**
> **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**
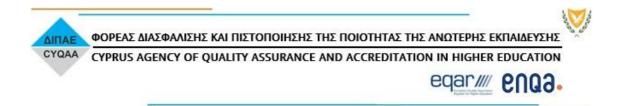> **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

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 regular teaching staff includes seven members. Four (4) full time members, and (3) part-time members.
- Four of these members are PhD holders. All four of them are suitably qualified to teach on the Business element of the program (strategy, marketing, etc) but they have less experience in the field of shipping/maritime studies or professional world.
- The maritime element is covered by two professionals (captains) with plenty of experience onboard. The maritime law is covered by a qualified lawyer.
- In addition, two (2) visiting lecturers support the program – one of them a shipping professional, and the other one an economist (PhD) who is active in research in shipping
- There are relevant policies in place regarding the organization of the teaching work.

Strengths

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

- Resident faculty members teaching courses that are part of the programme evaluated in this report are suitably qualified to teach and assist the program in achieving the objectives and planned learning outcomes.
- In particular, all members of the faculty teaching business and marketing and other business related issues have PhDs and significant teaching experience. This composition appears to be effective in the delivery and management of modules on the specific fields.
- The three members that teach the shipping element have professional experience, two of them as captains of seagoing vessels and one as maritime lawyer – providing the students plenty of real-life analysis, case studies and knowledge.
- That a vast majority of modules are delivered by resident faculty, ensures uniformity and standardization in the delivery and assessment process.
- The balance between resident and external faculty is quite healthy – with two visiting members focusing on the shipping element.
- Case studies are used to enhance the learning of the students. Instructors facilitate industry interactions and networking as well.
- There are efforts to develop research activities related to the MBA with Shipping – and at a certain level this is achieved, by articles that reach students and broader audience via a business bulletin and an in-house scientific journal.
- Teaching staff collaborate with colleagues from the partner institution in the UK (UWE). This ensures sharing of good practice and keeping up to date with developments in their field
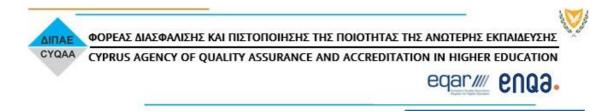
Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- There are some staff shortages in the area of shipping, which on a regular basis is supported only by three experienced professionals. However, the academic dimension of their qualifications is not evident. In addition, the nature of the involvement of this shipping related personnel is part-time.
- On the other hand, given that each of the taught modules of the program lasts for a year, as well as the obligation of students to develop a Dissertation worth 18 ECTS credits, generate further necessities with regards to supervision and regular contribution to the academic life. Thus, the program would benefit from the presence of a teaching member with academic credentials and teaching and research expertise in the field of shipping and is employed on a full-time basis – on a temporal basis, this is resolved by the contribution of two visiting lecturers, however, the length of their presence is questionable.
- There is not a clearly defined research culture in themes related to shipping. Efforts are present, and incentives are provided to those staff members engaged in research. Yet the detailed research output suggests that further work towards that direction is not evident. Advancing research and publications related to shipping business and relevant themes would facilitate state of the art knowledge of the teaching staff and eventually dissemination of the latest developments in business and shipping (among others, would also help to avoid the presence of some outdated publications in the curriculum of specific courses as listed in the application of the institution).

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	Partially 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**

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.

- Issues related to student admission, progression and recognition should be documented in the Student Handbook and the University Prospectus. Such documents have not been made available to members of this panel.
- Similarly, no data has been provided regarding student admissions, progression and completion. As such, it has not been possible to ascertain the extent to which the criteria in the 4 sub-categories have been met.
-

Strengths

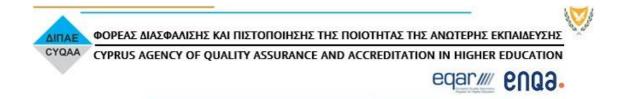*A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

- Members of the panel were impressed with the qualifications and quality of students that were interviewed. They were very supportive of the program and spoke positively about their experience.

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.

- Prepare a detailed students handbook that provides clearly defined procedures and guidelines for students. That document should be made available to all students as well as members of the evaluation committee

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	Partially compliant
4.2	Student progression	Partially compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Partially compliant
4.4	Student certification	Partially 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

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.

- Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programs.
- The academic supervision of students and ongoing evaluation of students' work throughout the course of studies is satisfactory.
- There are adequate resources available via the online learning platform. Although members of the panel have not had the chance to review the online platform, it is believed that it is comparable to that offered by other comparable courses and institutions
- Students' can provide feedback on their modules including its content, via an evaluation questionnaire (although these have not been made available to members of the committee).
- Student's welfare is provided to meet the personal, social and learning needs of students. Upon registration, students are assigned a tutor that provides pastoral care and guidance.
- The university has in place policies for the provision of accessible and inclusive study environment for all its students.
- The university subscribes to a number of shipping journals and research databases although it appears that there is no subscription to databases that provide historical data for shipping-specific research such as Clarksons, Datastream etc.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.
- The program is well supported in terms of student support services and there is a clear and well supported disability policy in place.
- The institution has a set of Erasmus cooperation agreements with foreign institutions, facilitating student mobility. The student population in Cyprus also contains non-cypriot students.

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.

- Students at an MBA program are particularly interested on their career progression after graduation. It appears that career services are provided by the tutor assigned to each student rather than a dedicated careers advisor.
- Access to databases that are vital for the efficient completion of teaching and research activities of students and faculty is not provided.

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	Partially compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Partially 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

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.

Not Applicable

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

Not Applicable

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.

Not Applicable

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	Choose answer
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Choose answer
6.3	Supervision and committees	Choose answer

D.

E. 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.
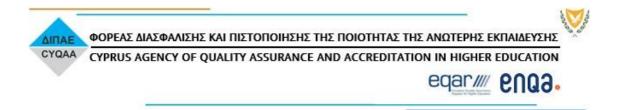
The External Evaluation Committee would like to re-iterate a number of positive points that came out of this review. In particular, the following aspects are points of strength on which the Course management team should build upon further in order to guarantee future growth and success:

- An experienced academic team with strong links with the local shipping community
- Members of the panel were impressed with the qualifications and quality of students that were interviewed. They were very supportive of the program and spoke positively about their experience
- The program is well supported in terms of student support services and there is a clear and well supported disability policy in place
- The committee finds that an elaborate quality assurance process is conducted with students, staff and stakeholders.

At the same time, there are a number of points that the management team need to address in order to for the program to reach its long-term objectives:

- The current program under the title 'MBA with Shipping' does not feel like an actual MBA programme, and has a shipping specialisation that is rather generic and perfunctory. The program does not include specialist topics such as entrepreneurship or digital innovation, that are integral parts in any MBA program.
- Similarly, there is no sufficient evidence of any experiential learning activities. The committee feels there is a lot more of this type of learning conducted than was apparent from the material presented to the committee and the discussions.
- The committee finds the current design of the courses illogical. In some cases, the course of 12 ECTS clearly consists of two components that are unrelated, and could just as well be separated into two 6 ECTS courses. The committee feels the programme management should come up with a clear vision of its own and design the programme and courses accordingly.
- Strengthening the academic dimension of teaching in the area of shipping, with academic oriented staff present on a regular basis would be helpful in both teaching and supervising Research and Dissertation (Research and Dissertation currently stand as one third of the programme's ECTS). While the professional expertise of the current personnel provides undoubtedly the much needed insights of shipping and the maritime world – the academic nature of teaching and supervision can be further enhanced.
- There is not a clearly defined research culture in themes related to shipping. Advancing research and publications related to shipping business and relevant themes would facilitate state of the art knowledge of the teaching staff and eventually dissemination of the latest developments in business and shipping. This in turn would require investment in appropriate technology, software and databases.

Finally, the committee would like to comment that our evaluation was hampered to some extent by the limited information that was presented to us. The evaluation would have benefitted from more elaborate student- and evaluation-related statistics and more detailed information on actual class room and extra-curricular activities. The presentation of part of the application document reads as the marketing

brochure for the program, which asks a lot of faith from the committee to make declarations about the program. For instance: "Our MBA [with] Shipping provides an excellent and proven platform for career enhancement, career change or entrepreneurial activities." We would have liked, for this case, and others, to have been presented with the information to back up these statements.

F. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Prof. Athanasios Pallis	
Prof. Nikos Nomikos	
Prof. Albert Veenstra	
Chrystaleni Tryfonos	

Date: 10 September 2021