

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 05/11/2021

Higher Education Institution's Response

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

- **Town:** Limassol

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

In Greek:

**Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων με Ναυτιλιακά (14 Μήνες
Πλήρης Φοίτηση/24 Μήνες Μερική Φοίτηση,
Μεταπτυχιακό, 90 ECTS)**

In English:

**Business Administration with Shipping (14 Months
FT/ 24 Months PT, Masters, 90 ECTS)**

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating and Accredited
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



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

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

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

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

EEC

➤ Strengths:

- *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.*

CIM

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the EEC for their kind words.

EEC

➤ Areas of improvement:

- *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, dropout rates, outcomes of the student evaluations of the programme, and so on.*

CIM

Please see attached Annex 1 with all the information requested.

EEC

- *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.*

CIM

This issue has now been addressed; all changes as implemented can be seen in Annex 2.

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

EEC

➤ Strengths:

- *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.*

CIM

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the EEC for their kind words.

EEC

➤ Areas of improvement:

- *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.*

CIM

The programme was accredited as an "MBA" in 2017 while a general MBA programme as currently offered by CIM was accredited in 2019; in both cases, the exact same specifications as this programme were presented and approved by the then EECs. Although we strongly believe that the programme is already aligned with the specifications of an MBA programme, we nevertheless welcome the EEC's recommendation for the Dissertation module to be made optional as opposed to compulsory; all relevant changes have been implemented and are presented in Annex 2.

EEC

- *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 classroom).*

CIM

Even though the application template as prepared by the Cyprus Quality Assurance Agency does not ask for detailed analysis of the experiential learning activities taking place at CIM, including the number or precise information about extra-curricular activities that are part of the courses (how many company visits, which companies, what is discussed during these visits, etc.), 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 etc), we welcome and respect the request of the EEC, which we deem helpful. All relevant information is now presented as part of Annex 2.

EEC

- *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.*

CIM

- The design of the programme presented to this EEC is the result of previous accreditation visits by EECs which previously accredited our MBA and MBA with Shipping. We do, however, note however the preference and recommendation of this EEC, and changed to this effect have been implemented and presented in Annex 2.

EEC

- *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 workload is on the light side.*

CIM

- ECTS have been confirmed by previous EECs (those which accredited the MBA and the MBA with Shipping). Yet again, however, we note and endorse the point of this EEC, and have implemented changes as presented in Annex 2.

EEC

- *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 workload, 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).*

CIM

- The Dissertation is a requirement for all MBA programmes operating in Cyprus, something confirmed during the MBA with Shipping accreditation in 2017. As far as we can tell, the only other accredited MBA Shipping programme in Cyprus, that of Neapolis University, has a thesis as a requirement (<https://www.nup.ac.cy/mba-in-shipping/>). Moreover, the CIM MBA, as accredited last year, has the exact same specifications as the MBA with Shipping presented to this EEC. Despite the above, this issue has been dealt with, as already mentioned in our reply to comments in Section 2. The Dissertation module is no longer compulsory.

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

EEC

➤ Strengths:

- *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 (UWL). This ensures sharing of good practice and keeping up to date with developments in their field.*

CIM

- We would like to express our appreciation to the EEC for identifying this substantial list of strengths and examples of best practice, proof, we believe, of the success of the programme and the balance achieved between academic theory and experiential learning.

EEC

➤ Areas of improvement:

- *There are some staff shortages in 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.*

CIM

- We beg to differ with the above statement, which we find inaccurate. CIM has one of the highest lecturer-to-student ratios. With 9 faculty members for a cohort of around 25 students, the ratio ensures good service and great support. We welcome by the EEC's finding during their meeting with students as part of this accreditation process according to which '*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.*'

For a total of 3 Shipping modules, there are 4 members of Faculty with a specialism in Shipping, a ratio that ensures that students' academic needs are served in the best possible way. When it comes to the academic dimension of their qualifications, this is evident in their CVs, presented in the Accreditation Pack. Lecturers on in the programme submitted for accreditation, whether Full-Time or Part-Time, have fixed, broad, and extensive academic duties, including office hours, dissertation supervision, mentoring, as well as research time activity (see, for example, supporting letters from Dr Nektarios Michael and Mr Stavros Dimitros). Based on the above, we strongly believe that the programme is very well equipped when it comes to teaching staff. Of course, we remain committed to enhancing and enriching our Shipping faculty, as made evident from recruitment made after 2017, the year when the programme was first accredited. Endorsing the EEC's recommendation, we have further recruited Dr Konstantinos Melas, a Shipping specialist and established researcher in the subject, who joins our faculty with extensive academic and research duties (relevant letter by Dr Konstantinos Melas is attached as Annex 4). Dr Melas will be teaching on the newly-introduced optional module, 'Shipping Finance' and is already playing a central part in our research activities through our research centre.

EEC

- *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.*

CIM

- We yet again beg to differ with the above statement, which we find inaccurate. As already mentioned, all members of faculty, irrespective of their status, are fully involved in supervision and in the wider academic life of the programme. As such, the commitment and role of visiting lecturers to the programme is both fundamental and proven. The EEC's comment seems at odds with the EEC's comment that '*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.*' The two attached letters (Annex 4) from visiting lecturers help to confirm this.
- To further bolster our faculty and team, we have recently recruited Dr Georgia Thrasyvoulou, who is now a Full-Time member of staff, as of 20 September 2021. Dr Thrasyvoulou's expertise is in Occupational Psychology, and will be involved in the delivery of the module 'Organisational Behaviour'. As already mentioned, Dr Konstantinos Melas has also joined our ranks as Visiting Lecturer, with extensive academic and research duties.
- In any case, and given that we have fully endorsed the EEC's recommendation to move away from 'Dissertation as a compulsory module and towards an optional Company Project Report, and despite our new recruitments, the need for more academics to be recruited has been made somewhat redundant.

EEC

- *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).*

CIM

- We again beg to differ with the above statement. Shipping is one of the main research strengths of CIM and features prominently as a research cluster of our in-house Cyprus Business Research Centre. Dr Nektarios Michail, a member of faculty, and Dr Konstantinos Melas (who was already a Research Fellow and is now a more fully-fledged member of the MBA with Shipping team, are publishing regularly in the most prestigious Shipping journals: for example, *Maritime Transport Research* (vol. 2, 2021), *The Asian Journal of Shipping & Logistics* (vol. 37, 2021). They give papers to international conferences, and their research is attracting worldwide interest (for example, their research papers are ranked among the top 10% downloaded through the Social Science Research Network – August 2021). More information can be found in Annex 3.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

(ESG 1.4)

EEC

➤ **Strengths:**

- *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.*

CIM

- We are delighted to note that the EEC was impressed with the quality of our students. At CIM, we strive to provide academic excellence, and the comments of our students fill us with confidence of the success of the programme and the continued appeal of CIM.

EEC

➤ **Areas of improvement:**

- *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.*

CIM

- We note our surprise with the above comment, for at no point did the EEC request to view our Student Handbook or, in fact, any other Quality Assurance handbook. CIM has always had a detailed student Handbook which is updated yearly and which details clearly well-defined procedures and guidelines for students. The Handbook is published on the CIM



Intranet and is also attached as Annex 6 here, alongside the Academic Regulations Handbook (Annex 7).

5. Learning resources and student support

(ESG 1.6)

EEC

➤ Strengths:

- *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.*

CIM

- We would like to express our appreciation to the EEC for recognising strengths and examples of best practice, proof of the strength of the programme and the rich learning resources we strive to offer our students, as well as our commitment to outstanding student support.

EEC

➤ Areas of improvement:

- *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.*

CIM

- We yet again beg to differ with the above statement. We pride ourselves on being known in the local market and community for offering outstanding career advice, something confirmed by numbers: we have one of the highest employability and satisfaction rates among higher education institutions in Cyprus. Alongside support offered by many of our Strategic Partners, we employ two dedicated career advisors (it is inaccurate to claim that career advice is offered by tutors):
 - Nicosia: Dr Georgia Thrasyvoulou
 - Limassol: Ms Elena Makedona

EEC

- *Access to databases that are vital for the efficient completion of teaching and research activities of students and faculty is not provided.*

CIM

- We are surprised by the above assessment, which anyway appears contrary to the statement of the EEC that *'Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programs.'* CIM offers its student a wealth of expensive learning resources, such as:

- Emerald 200 Management Journal Collection
- EBSCO Business E-Book Collection
- EBSCO Business Source Elite (BSE) as a resource in area of "Shipping & Logistics"

In addition, access to specialised Shipping related journals is provided, including subscriptions to:

- JOURNAL OF SHIPPING & TRADE
- JOURNAL OF MARITIME RESEARCH



- MARITIME ECONOMICS & LOGISTICS
- THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT
- THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL DISTRIBUTION AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT
- JOURNAL OF HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT
- SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Nevertheless, and committed to enriching our learning resources, we have since followed the EEC's recommendation and secured access for our MBA with Shipping students to **Clarksons Research, Shipping Intelligence Network** (relevant letter attached as Annex 5).



6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A



7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

N/A

B. Conclusions and final remarks

EEC

➤ **Strengths:**

- *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.*

CIM

- We would like to express our appreciation to the EEC for identifying these strengths and examples of best practice.

EEC

➤ **Areas of improvement:**

- *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.*

CIM

- The programme was accredited in 2017 as an "MBA with Shipping", with a general MBA been accredited in 2019 with the very specifications of this programme presented to the EEC, which is why we are confident that the programme warrants the title of 'MBA'. This is confirmed by the fact that, the only other similar Master Shipping programme accredited in Cyprus, that of Neapolis University, carries the title of MBA and follows a very similar philosophy as that of our own MBA with Shipping. That said, we value and welcome the EEC's comments, which is why their recommendations have been fully implemented, including the introduction of specialist topics such as Entrepreneurship and Digital Innovation, to align the programme closer to what they have in mind when they think of an MBA programme.

EEC

- *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.*

CIM

- We yet again beg to differ with the EEC on this point. Experiential learning is at the heart of what we do and at the centre of all of our programmes, something recognised widely. While experiential learning cuts across all CIM programmes, it is more so in the case of our MBA and MBA with Shipping. We regret that we were not given the opportunity (for it is not customary to go into detail about the experiential learning in the Cyprus QAA Accreditation Pack) to detail the various ways in which experiential learning is fundamental to the

programme. We hope that it is now abundantly clear from the revised material submitted as part of this reply pack that experiential learning is part of the DNA of the programme under accreditation.

- CIM is the most industry-connected Business School in Cyprus, with a network of 20 Strategic Partners (one leading company per industry):
 1. Bank of Cyprus
 2. C.A.Papaellinas Group
 3. McDonalds
 4. ForexTime
 5. IBM
 6. Parimatch
 7. Cablenet
 8. Columbia Shipmanagement
 9. Tototheo Maritime
 10. Charalambides Christis
 11. KPMG
 12. GanDirect Insurance
 13. Iron Mountain
 14. Alphamega Hypermarkets
 15. Green Energy Group
 16. KEAN
 17. CYFIELD Group
 18. Remedica
 19. Unicars
 20. TBWA Entelia

As part of the MOU agreements signed with these companies,

- MBA students conduct their dissertation research with these companies
- Our Strategic Partners (SPs) lead guest lectures and workshops on a regular basis
- SPs provide exclusive job opportunities to CIM MBA students
- SPs transfer knowledge and SPs like IBM provide exclusive access to databases for our MBA students
- and SPs exclusively invite CIM MBA students to networking events

EEC

- *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.*

CIM

- The structure the programme and current design was the result of recommendations of the last EEC that accredited the programme in 2017. Respecting and welcoming the feedback of the current EEC, we have adapted the structure and design of the programme.

EEC

- *Strengthening the academic dimension of teaching in 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.*

CIM

- We don't find the above statement accurate. All members of faculty, irrespective of their status, are fully involved with supervision duties as well as with the academic life of the programme more widely. The duties and role of visiting lecturers serves the academic needs of the programme. We note the EEC's comment that "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." Yet again, however, and following the EEC's recommendation for replacing the 'Dissertation' module with a Company Project Report, the need for more academics is addressed.

EEC

- *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.*

CIM

- We again beg to differ with the above statement. As already explained, Shipping is one of the main research strengths of CIM and features prominently as a research cluster of our in-house Cyprus Business Research Centre. Dr Nektarios Michail, a member of faculty, and Dr Konstantinos Melas (who was already a Research Fellow and is now a more fully-fledged member of the MBA with Shipping team, are publishing regularly in the most prestigious Shipping journals. As evident from their output and research, they are not hindered in any way. CIM provides plenty of research resources, while it has also been adding new ones (as again explained above).

EEC

- *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 classroom and extracurricular activities.*

CIM

- We express our surprise at the above statement, for we were ready to provide any and all sort of additional information that could have been requested, including of course statistics as well as detailed information on classroom and extracurricular. In any case, the requested statistics can be found in Annex 1.

Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Dr Nektarios Michail	Senior Lecturer	
Prof George Zachariades	Programme Leader	
Captain Valentin Mavrinac	Programme Leader	
Stavros Dimitros	Senior Lecturer	
Dr Christos Hadjiyannis	Dean	
Dr Constantinos Constantinou	Director of Research	

Date: 05/11/2021

