Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 03/08/2020

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  Atlantis College

- **Town: Liopetri**

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

  In Greek:

  Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (συν ένα προαιρετικό προπαρασκευαστικό έτος, Δίπλωμα, 2 έτη)

  In English:

  Business Administration (plus an optional foundation year, 2 years, Diploma)

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

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

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) 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, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

    - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
    - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
    - *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).*

- *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, 1.8, 1.9)

Findings
The application as well as presentations and dialogues at the (remote) site visit provided us with a very good understanding of the proposed study programme. The programme is clearly designed with an intention to integrate theory and practice through a number of mandatory modules. The aim is to stay close to actual business practice and to draw on and sustain a close bond to the businesses and industries in the local area of the college. The participants in the (remote) site visit demonstrated very good understanding of the target group of their program. The programme has been developed with inputs from a number of sources, incl. faculty, students, alumni, and business contacts, and the undertaking of the programme will be supported by a lot of ongoing activities and initiatives, incl. the library, computer lab, other labs, student organizations and clubs, alumni association, ERASMUS+ opportunities and more. Atlantis College has explicit plans and aims for research and future development. All participants in the (remote) site visit showed very great and convincing enthusiasm about the programme.

Strengths

- Through engagement with stakeholders, especially the local businesses and industries, Atlantis College has a very good understanding of the market demand for their intended students as well the newest trends within the fields of study.

- Programme goals, learning outcomes and module contents are well described.

- The programme allows students to develop their theoretical and practical skills and knowledge, especially related to the local market.

- The College offers foundation modules to students that do not fulfill the requirements to start on the core modules.

- The structure of the programme is very clear, and the modules have a logical sequence. All modules are mandatory - and academic progress is built into the programme.

- A defined class size on 8-15 students ensures focus on the single student's needs.

- The quality of the programme is monitored by continuous evaluations on a regular basis.

- Quality assurance is ensured by a thorough and explicit Quality Assurance Policy, and include a Programme Review Committee (PRC) and a Programme Evaluation Committee (PEC).

- Atlantis College had a clear policy and more tools to prevent plagiarism.

- Collaboration and strong ties to the local area as well as an alumni association provides good opportunities for professional development, guest lectures, site visits, and career possibilities.

- The ERASMUS+ programme offers faculty and student mobility, providing the involved possibilities for international experiences.

- The alumni association offers the students the possibilities of a life-long bond to Atlantis College.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The course descriptions included in the application were not fully updated, as acknowledged in the dialogue at the (remote) onsite visit. More course descriptions pointed to textbooks that were not in the newest edition, e.g. BUS 404 Business Strategy. To ensure that students are offered the newest knowledge within the various fields, we recommend that (1) the documentation for the application is updated properly, and (2) a policy on updating module content and material explicitly states that most recent textbook editions are required in all modules.

As mentioned in section 3, the programme would benefit from more explicit contacts with one or more universities abroad, with visiting faculty, upgrading of current faculty through pursuing PhD degrees, hiring of faculty with PhD degrees, and through more research activities.

1.1, 1.3 & 1.4 Compliant and 1.2 Partially Compliant

Regarding the Areas of Improvement and or recommendations, 1.2 , the Bibliography for BUS 404 Business Strategy ,MGT 301 Operations Management, Bus 201 Business Environment and MTH 204 Statistics have been updated with the latest edition of the textbook See Annex 1.

In addition to this and as per the suggestion of the committee, we have incorporated into our Quality Assurance PRC Policy that when reviewing the programme and module content and material, use of the most recent edition of the textbook is required.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment
(ESG 1.3)

Findings

The College has given due consideration to the teaching and learning design. Teaching methodologies and mechanisms appear to be sound. In conversations with teaching staff and students we heard evidence of pedagogical methods appropriate to the successful achievement of the stated learning outcomes.

There was a good understanding of the distinctive aims of Diploma programme, and how it can lead to further study.

The faculty appreciate the need to incorporate both practical and theoretical elements into the learning and teaching and to explore the interrelationships between theories and practices in ways which will bring subjects alive for students.

Assessments processes are appropriate and overseen by the College's wider procedures.

There are clearly-understood processes in place to ensure effective feedback is given to students on their work. There is engaged management oversight of the Programme, and we have the sense that there is a tight-knit team in place.

Strengths

The College structure is designed to maintain consistent quality standards and the aspiration of continuous improvement.

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The well-defined pathway through the modules offer the students a systematic learning progression and clear expectations.

The College has invested in up to date educational platforms (including MS Teams). Students told us how useful these were during the pandemic. Staff also found them to be user-friendly and a good teaching package learning and teaching. This is helpful experience for building resilience.

The College has close local ties with particular industry sectors.

Staff and students showed mutual respect and positive regard. Though we spoke to a small number of students, they told us that communication with faculty members and the administrative team is easy. Open channels of communication appear to be an established part of the culture of the College.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Though some staff members have PhDs, the number is perhaps relatively low (though we accept that this is a relatively small College). The Committee would encourage investment in work to incorporate research into teaching more directly. To that end, it is important that the College supports the professional development of faculty in relation to developing their research and scholarship (perhaps where appropriate including opportunities to pursue part-time PhDs for staff who are interested in doing so, and more generally to undertake research activities. This could be a valuable basis for developing the quality of the College and its teaching provision.

The proposed teaching team is perhaps relatively small (again we acknowledge the smaller size of this College). As student numbers grow as projected, it is important for the College to continue investing in the capacity of staff.

The College has a strong local focus and good links with particular industries. It seems to be in touch with student demand for the new Programme in Cyprus. Its linkages more internationally (beyond the immediate region) could be developed further. Its mechanisms for student recruitment in particular countries may give it good footholds for developing these. We note the College's location in a beautiful and popular part of Cyprus gives it a certain selling point to some students. But it is important for the College not to rest on this appeal too much, and to continue to develop additional selling points rooted in learning and teaching and student development.

We note that some comparable institutions have been effective in building partnerships with universities. The College could consider the role that such strategic partnerships might play in the maturing of the College and how such linkages might provide professional development opportunities for staff, and exchange opportunities for students.
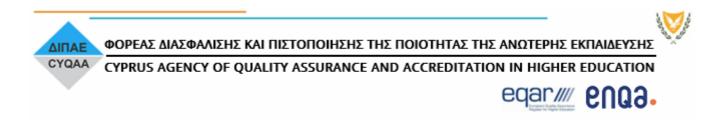
2.1, 2.2 & 2.3 all Compliant.

The College actively encourages faculty development and offers support in the form of time release from teaching and financial assistance where necessary. Faculty are encouraged to pursue additional qualifications.

The College is attempting to build and develop international partnerships, initially through the Erasmus programme for staff and students. We have recently been awarded an additional grant for 2020-2022 for staff and student mobility. We will continue this in the coming years as more students and staff take part in Erasmus programmes. We are also looking into the opportunity of developing links with specific universities and colleges in Greece and Italy.

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3. Teaching Staff
(ESG 1.5)

Findings

We met with all but two of the teaching staff (the missing members were said to be travelling abroad) which means that we had a comprehensive view of the entire teaching staff of Atlantis College. Two of the faculty members hold PhD degrees. They all seem engaged, committed to their job and teaching and professional and have very good English language skills.

In addition, they seem to be pleased with their salaries, working conditions and the overall College working environment. They appear to take teaching seriously and are supportive of the initiatives regarding research (i.e. the younger members seem to be doing some research, attending conferences and the like, and have a good understanding of the value of doing research for an educational institution). There is only a positive consequence (bonus, reduction of teaching load, recognition etc.) for faculty in case of research performance, but apparently not for teaching performance.

Strengths

The faculty seemed to be well integrated and on good working terms. The experienced faculty, in addition, have been with Atlantis College for a quite satisfactory time, which means there seems to be a good work environment that is beneficial to the BBA program.

Furthermore, it seems that the outcome of teaching is being monitored and taken seriously by the institution and that any issues or problems are professionally and effectively taken care of. There is also a process of "self-evaluation" of the faculty regarding their own courses which was often reported and mentioned during our (remote) field visit.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

When we asked the teaching staff about their interactions with outside stakeholders, we noticed that there are not enough touchpoints with practice. Only permanent faculty exists. Visiting faculty was not mentioned. This seems a bit unfortunate since there could be an interaction with other universities and practitioners from outside. They could just invite a
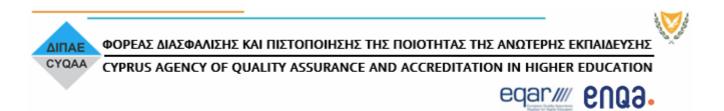
practitioner or a professor to come and present for an hour regarding a topic the Business Administration students discussed in the classroom.

Finally, we believe that the academic staff of Atlantis College should be encouraged to do research. Although, it seems there is some interaction, among the young faculty members, regarding the research process, i.e. how to apply and attend a research conference etc, we could suggest to organise actual research seminars in which faculty would present research papers to others in order to discuss these, a practice that may improve the quality of the research. We also encourage to develop their teaching staff, by getting a PhD in order to be more competitive.

3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 all Partially Compliant

We did mention during the course of the meeting that we indeed do invite guest speakers to come in and present to the students from industry and from other universities in Cyprus. This way they are exposed to both the practical side of Business as well as additional academics from other teaching institutions.

With regard to research, a research committee has been set up and as part of our strategic plan, we aim to improve research at the College and promote and actively encourage staff development and improvement of their qualifications, for example, pursuing a PhD.

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4. Students
(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Findings

Altantis College has very clear and transparent regulations, policies, processes and criteria for student admission. Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression are in place. Atlantis College ensures that students benefit from their knowledge from practice as well as apply the gain knowledge in practical settings through-out the study. Students are provided with a certificate that clearly acknowledge the knowledge gained during the study.

Strengths
- Atlantis College is doing good expectation alignment by being transparent about admission procedures and about progress monitoring.
- By targeting a mixture of international and local students with the programme, Atlantis College enhanced intercultural knowledge exchange and personal development of their students.
- Atlantis College offers students opportunities to achieve supplementary knowledge, experiences and recognition by offering e.g. ERASMUS+ opportunities for going abroad.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
- Currently, Atlantis College has 225 students. We recommend the College to continuously work on attracting more students in order to grow the student body, to the benefit of all stakeholders involved.

4.1, 4.2, 4.3 & 4.4 all Compliant

Obviously, we continuously work on and strive to attract more students both internationally and locally to increase and grow the student body. We have several international agents in various countries abroad. We offer promotional seminars to them to keep them informed and updated regarding the college programmes of study, admission requirements, visa procedures etc. We also consistently attend education fayres in Cyprus and offer open day events to potential students. We also have a systematic advertising campaign on national TV and on social media.

5. Resources
   (ESG 1.6)

Findings

The teaching and learning resources (including materials and reading resources) are provided to students and are appropriate. The Evaluation meetings established that the Course readings are updated regularly, though this was not evident from some parts of the original submission.

In our conversations with the teaching team, we saw heard their strong commitment to adopting student-centred learning, taking into account of the different needs and backgrounds of the cohorts.

Administrative systems appear to be appropriate. There are good organisational structures in plae in what is a relatively small College. As noted in Section 2, it is important that the College recognizes the need to maintain capacity in the administrative team and as well as supporting the professional development needs of its existing staff.

Because the site visit was not possible, we looked at presentations of physical resources made to us by the College. These seem to be modern and adequate, and incorporate a mix of dedicated teaching spaces, study areas, and social areas. The standard of general infrastructure seems to be reasonable. The library and IT resources were seen by students to be very satisfactory.

There was pride among staff about how the College had supported students during the pandemic. This was also the feeling among the students we spoke to. The experience of meeting these contingencies can now be incorporated into future planning. If remote learning becomes a more regular occurrence this may have implications for the patterns of demand on staff and the design of pedagogy

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Strengths

The College plays a valuable role in supporting students' mobility within and across higher education and the introduction of the Diploma will bolster this contribution, especially as it aligns with existing foundation courses.

Local students are seen as a significant 'target' for recruitment to the Diploma and the College is aware of string demand.

There are dedicated job roles which enable the College to provide advice and welfare support, in addition to the dedicated teaching staff. The students were aware of how to access these different services and support whether on campus or remotely.

Our meetings gave us a strong sense of commitment among all staff to the student experience and progression.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The recruitment targets for the programme are high and if achieved will cause increased demand for resources and materials, including academic materials and IT resources and support. It is important the College recognizes the potential for increased demand in its strategic, operational and budgetary processes.

The College will need to ensure that the adequacy of resources (i.e. academic materials and subscriptions, IT resources, staffing levels across the College) is maintained and refreshed in line with increasing student numbers.

Uncertainty about 'face to face' teaching post-Covid19 faced by all further and higher education institutions means that Atlantis College will need to ensure that it has good contingency planning processes. The plans must ensure that students can access materials and learning remotely at if/ when necessary, and that the quality of learning and teaching is maintained to an appropriate level.

During the Evaluation it emerged that some elements of the Application documentation been reproduced from an earlier process (e.g. the inclusion of reading lists from some years ago). We suggest that this represents a missed opportunity to refresh all the paperwork for the programme. Doing so would give the Committee a more robust basis for its work, including the Q&A during the visit. (It would also be a good courtesy given that the Committee spends considerable time examining the materials.) Finally, but most importantly, it would be a good learning and improvement exercise in and of itself, and would support the College's aspiration to a process of continuous improvement in line with its ambitions.

5.1, 5.2, 5.3 & 5.4 all Compliant

The College recognizes the potential for increased student demand in its strategic and operational and budgetary processes. It also recognizes the need to ensure adequacy of resources with increasing numbers of students. Based upon the lockdown in Cyprus and the transition to online delivery of the modules successfully and quickly, we feel certain that we have a contingency plan in place through delivery of modules using Microsoft teams and that this does not in any way affect the quality of the learning and teaching.

6. Additional for distance learning programmes
(ALL ESG)

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7. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

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8. Additional for joint programmes
(ALL ESG)

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

This was a well organised 'visit', even though there were some technical complications. The Committee benefited from the engagement of staff from all parts of the College. They presented the plans very well and responded openly to the Committee's questions.

Strengths

Atlantis College has a good understanding of the market demand for prospective students, especially from within Cyprus.

The Programme goals and learning outcomes have been clearly described and there is a well defined pathway for students.

We heard evidence of appropriate pedagogical methods in relation to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The participants in the (remote) site visit demonstrated very good understanding of the target group of their program.

The ERASMUS+ programme offers faculty and student mobility, providing the involved possibilities for international experiences.

Areas for Improvement

The aim is to stay close to actual business practice and to draw on and sustain a close bond to the businesses and industries in the local area of the college. There is scope to think about wider linkages, including building international networks which will benefit students.

Relatedly, as detailed in section 3, the programme would benefit from more explicit contacts with one or more universities abroad, with opportunities for visiting faculty, development of current faculty through pursuing PhD degrees, and through increasing research activity.

To ensure that students are offered the newest knowledge within the various fields, we recommend that the documentation for the application is updated regularly. The College should be explicit in its policy that most recent textbook editions are required in all modules.

There is scope to increase the touchpoints with practice, including the use of guest speakers drawn from industry, appropriate to the programme.

The academic staff of Atlantis College should be encouraged to further develop their research activities, including for example participation in or organising research seminars in which their work can be discussed. Growing the research culture in the College would require significant investment and institutional support but would benefit the quality of the College and its programmes.

The College will need to ensure that the adequacy of resources (i.e. academic materials and subscriptions, IT resources, staffing levels across the College) is maintained and refreshed in line with increasing student numbers. Alongside this, Atlantis College will need to ensure that it has good contingency planning processes to deal with uncertainties in the post-Covid19 world.

We intend to maintain close ties with business and industry in the local area and we aim to build additional ties internationally and network further. This process has already begun with the Erasmus programme (we are now in our second year of receiving grants and have already successfully sent student on mobilities). We aim to further develop our links with international universities and colleges and staff will have the opportunity to take part in staff development and increasing research with these intended partners. This is our goal.

As part of the PRC procedure, we have included in this that the most recent editions of textbooks and course materials are adopted.

We will continue to invite guest speakers from Industry and from academia in Cyprus and hopefully add to our networks with academics from abroad.

In addition to CPD offered in- house, we promote and actively encourage that our faculty pursue research. The institution already supports this through time release to the faculty and financial assistance where necessary. This is an ongoing process and one that we intend to improve.

The college is confident that its resources are adequate to accommodate an increase in student numbers.

Contingency planning is in place in respect of the uncertainties that we are dealing with regarding COVID 19. The previous experience in February enabled us to transfer to the online delivery mode of teaching and we are confident that if this should be necessary to adopt again, we are in a position to continue to offer quality teaching and learning.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Mr. Michael Aresti	Executive Director	
Ms. Sharon Michael	Academic Director	
Ms. Cornelia Nicolaou	Programme Coordinator	
Dr. Marios Alaeddine	Assistant Professor	
Mr. Panayiotis Panayi	Senior Lecturer	
Mr. Demetris Aresti	Lecturer / IT	
Ms. Melina Charalambous	Lecturer / Student Affairs	
Ms. Maria Aresti	Admissions Officer	

Date: 27/072020