

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019

# Higher Education Institution's response

- **Higher education institution:**

Atlantis College

- **Town:** Liopetri, Ammochostos
- **Programme of study (Name, ECTS, duration, cycle)**

**In Greek:** Διεύθυνση Επιχειρήσεων Φιλοξενίας και Τουρισμού (2 Έτη, Συν Ένα Προαιρετικό Προπαρασκευαστικό Έτος, Δίπλωμα) 120 ECTS

**In English:** Hospitality & Tourism Management ( 2 years, plus an optional Foundation Year, Diploma) 120 ECTS

- **Language of instruction:** .....English ....
- **Programme's status**  
**New programme:** .....√.....  
**Currently operating:** .....

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 and 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015 and N. 47(I)/2016].

## 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, without changing the format of the report:*
  - *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

This 2-year Diploma in Hospitality & Tourism Management taught in English targets undergraduate students aiming to develop a career in hospitality and tourism. It is positioned as a good opportunity for personal and professional development, through equipping students with knowledge, foreign languages and the skills of operations and management for the hospitality and tourism sectors. This is expected to support their career development and professional life. The aims and objectives of the programme should, therefore, enable students to develop a range of skills and techniques, personal qualities and attributes essential for successful performance for working directly in the Hospitality and Tourism sector.

During the evaluation meeting, the management team of the College provided an overview of the College in general and of the 2-year Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management specifically. It seems that teaching work is organized efficiently, and the student interviewed was satisfied with the provision. An effective administration structure supports the delivery of the programme. Teaching staff seemed enthusiastic about teaching their students. There is adequate tourism and hospitality expertise in the team but limited research output in highly respected tourism and hospitality journals. It is also evident that a few members of staff are tourism and hospitality academic specialists and have relevant background studies. Some members of the teaching team have a good insight of the tourism and hospitality industry and they are involved in the industry and other related activities. The teaching staff were somehow involved in the preparation of module documentation and learning outcomes.

Quality assurance has been documented from an internal point of view to a satisfactory degree. An internal committee meets regularly to discuss quality assurance issues and intervene when this is deemed appropriate. Academic fraud is taken seriously; students are required to submit their assignments electronically; these are subsequently scanned for plagiarism by members of academic staff.

The new 2-year Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management was primarily designed by the senior academic management team based on consultation with both internal and external stakeholders. Teaching members of staff are also expected to become involved in the process at a later stage to take ownership of their modules and effectively deal with any emerging issues. The study programme is current and consistent with developments in the hospitality and tourism sectors and its content and objectives are in accordance with each other. Networking with local travel and leisure companies has already been pursued to provide students with internships.

Regardless of the credits transferred, students must complete a minimum of 30 Atlantis College credits / 60 ECTS for the Diploma. Evaluation of transferred credits may vary based on the individual cases and depending on the completed academic courses, presented to the Academic Affairs Office. The College will award credits to students who study abroad for one semester or one year under the LLP/ERASMUS + programme. The study period is an integral part of the student's programme of study and full academic recognition is given as decided in the Learning Agreement. Like other programmes currently offered by the College, the new programme is expected to attract not only Cypriot but also international students interested in hospitality and tourism studies. As this is a new programme of study, the EEC understands that no public information on this is currently available.

### Strengths

- The College is a well-established learning provider with a large number of students in other programmes.
- The use of Moodle as an integrated learning platform has already been approved as a highly efficient, friendly and easy-to-learn tool from the students.
- The library is open 6 days a week
- There is an interlibrary loan contract with the library of the University of Cyprus which offers almost unlimited access to methodological, theoretical and practical sources.
- Books can be ordered online for the benefit of the students of Atlantis College.
- Programme monitoring refers to a regular systematic process. It usually takes place annually through the Annual Monitoring Evaluation Report (AMER) and provides a check on on-going learning and teaching provision at operational level. The continuing currency and validity of the programme is considered in terms of professional and industry practice where appropriate. Changes in the external environment such as requirements of professional statutory and regulatory bodies are also considered.
- Members of the academic team appear to be actively involved with significant external stakeholders for knowledge exchange.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The following minor recommendations/changes are proposed:

- The study programme offers several modules with limited attempt to customize and contextualize learning to the students interested in hospitality and tourism; this is especially the case with economics and accounting but also statistics. The generic business modules do not include literature relevant to hospitality and tourism. Most textbooks suggested for the modules are appropriate but rather outdated; moreover, tourism and hospitality academic journal articles are not included in the module outlines. The EEC, therefore, recommends that contextualization in hospitality and tourism should be applied throughout the curriculum - reference lists should also be updated accordingly.
- It is suggested that the description (purpose, objectives, learning outcomes and contents) of the "Introduction to the Hospitality and Tourism Industry" module should be restructured to explicitly highlight the role of tourism - at present, the description is almost entirely hospitality-oriented.
- Reassessing the current practice of allocating equal ECTS across the programme is suggested, bearing in mind the module importance and workload varies across the programme.
- In the proposed programme, together with English Writing, there is French as a second/third language; the feasibility to offer other languages such as German, Chinese, Russian or Greek was discussed during the evaluation meeting. In any case, however, the provision of hospitality and tourism

related modules could be expanded at the expense of language modules ECTS-wise unless language training delivery becomes more explicitly specialized in hospitality and tourism oral communication and interaction. The EEC also suggests that the College should consider implementing common scheduled language classes with other programmes to increase the cost effectiveness of foreign language provision.

- The uniqueness of the programme and its differentiation will serve the College in promoting and positioning the programme. In this context, the EEC recommends that the College should offer specialized modules such as “Wellness Tourism” to capitalize on its existing facilities and infrastructure currently used by other educational programmes (e.g. health and beauty studies). Likewise, the College should also consider introducing some credit-bearing elective modules in the programme to increase its appeal.
- Finally, the EEC suggests that the Summer Internship should become a credit-bearing module (minimum 6 ECTS) to encourage the students to improve their overall performance. This can be done by introducing a report, which should be submitted by the students after the completion of the internship and evaluated accordingly by the academic staff.

### **The Evaluation Team rated this section as substantially compliant.**

The team were satisfied with the compulsory use of Moodle as a learning platform, Library opening hours and the Inter-Library loan system with the University of Cyprus. They also saw that there are Quality Assurance processes regarding Programme Monitoring and Review.

Taking into consideration the comments and suggestions of the team regarding Areas of Improvement, please note the following amendments:

- 1) To contextualize learning for the students of Hospitality & Tourism Management, the Microeconomics course has been replaced with Economics for Tourism. Statistics has been amended to Business Statistics for Hospitality & Tourism. Course texts have been updated and Journal Articles are included in the course outlines. See Annex A for new course descriptions
- 2) The Course description for Introduction to the Hospitality & Tourism Industry has been amended to explicitly include and highlight the role of tourism. See Annex A
- 3) The Allocation of ECTS across the programme has been changed specifically in regard to Languages and Internship. See Annex B
- 4) Additional Languages of German I & II, and Russian I & II have been added to the Pathway to give the students a choice between French, German and Russian. See Annex A and B
- 5) In addition to giving students the choice for language selection, the course of Spa and Wellness Management has been added to the pathway following the suggestion of the team to capitalize on existing facilities and to offer specialized modules. See Annex A
- 6) The Internship course has become a credit bearing module with 6 ECTS. Student must complete a report at the end of the internship which will be evaluated by the Academic Staff.

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

### Findings

- All teaching staff have been trained to use Moodle, the virtual learning environment used at the College. During the visit there was an obvious spirit of teamwork among all staff members including administrative staff. New staff members are mentored by a senior member of staff.
- Internal monitoring of the programme is done through the Quality Assurance Committee which monitors and review programmes on offer. This committee meets regularly and an annual report Annual Monitoring Evolution Report is produced to check on on-going learning and teaching provision at operational level. (See more details in Section 1 of this report)
- The Programme Evaluation Committees are formed once a year after the final examinations of students to assess the extent to which the aims and objectives of the programme are being met. The Programme Review Committee which includes at least one (1) student from each year of study meets once per semester to ensure that new and ongoing programmes are delivered smoothly.
- The proposed programme equips students with digital skills through the first-year module “Computer Fundamentals”. Additionally, students are expected to interact with Moodle and submit their assignments electronically.
- Students with different abilities are provided with additional support by the teaching staff through regular meetings. During the visit the teaching team emphasized that the support offered to students who are slow learners is key to the high pass rate at the College. The English language tutor provides students with additional help with the language. Student with learning difficulties and other personal issues have access to a counsellor on site.

### Strengths

- The EEC will like to commend staff members of the College for the support that they offer to students and for dealing with students responsibly and with compassion.
- The teaching rooms are well equipped with good facilities as also discussed in Section 5 of this report.
- Moodle is available in English for this programme. Learning and other module-related materials are made available to students in advance. This may assist students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia.
- The use of the Atlantis Cafe on site as part of the training for future students on the proposed programme will bring added benefits of relating theory with practice. It will offer the students with relevant training which will enhance their learning experience in real life situations.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC would like to make the following minor recommendations/changes.

- As one of the objectives of the programme is to equip students with the skills and knowledge to eventually study for a Bachelor’s degree programme, it is recommended that teaching and learning at

the second year include some element of research. For example, one of the second-year modules may be partially examined by means of a report.

- As discussed in Section 1 of this report, the reading list needs to be updated with more recent textbooks. Tutors need to include academic journals in the reading list for second year students.
- Learning resources (including electronic subscriptions to academic and professional hospitality and tourism journal databases and books) at the library need improvement as also discussed in Section 5 of this report. It is recommended that the College invests in more library resources.
- Students currently have access to Microsoft Office. It is recommended that the College invests in at least one simulation programme relevant to Tourism and Hospitality (e.g. Amadeus GDS) to enhance teaching and student experience.
- Additional recommendation regarding assessment is provided in Sections 1 and 3 of this report and regarding resources under Section 5.

### **The Evaluation Team rated this section as substantially compliant.**

The Team commended the College for the support they offer the students and the use of Moodle. They were also impressed with the use of Atlantis Cafeteria as a training resource for the students to expose them to real life situations.

Taking into consideration the comments and suggestions of the team regarding Areas of Improvement, please note the following amendments:

- 1) In order to equip the students with skills and knowledge to eventually study for Bachelor Degree the assessment criteria for several second year modules includes Assignments and / or Final Report.
- 2) More recent textbooks have been added to the course reading lists. The following academic journals have been included:

### **Journals for Leisure & Recreation, Structure of Tourism, Introduction to Hospitality and Tourism courses:**

- Annals of Tourism Research
- International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Emerald
- Current Issues in Tourism
- Harvard Business Review
- International Journal of Tourism Research
- Journal of International Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism Management
- Journal of Sustainable Tourism
- Journal of Tourism Studies
- Tourism Recreation Research
- Tourism Management

## Journals/Magazines for F&B Management

- International Journal of Food and Beverage Manufacturing and Business Models (IJFBMBM)
- Food and Beverage Magazine
- International Journal of the Food & Beverage Industry

## Journals/Magazines for Geography of Tourism

- Tourism Geographies- An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment, Taylor & Francis Online
- Journal of Travel Research
- National Geographic Magazine
- The Planet Magazine, Western Washington University
- H Net- Humanities and Sciences Online: Journal of Geography and Tourism
- Tourism Geographies

- 3) Even though the team were substantially satisfied with the resources, the College endeavours to enrich the library with additional learning resources textbooks and access to professional and academic Hospitality & Tourism journal databases and books.
- 4) The college has authorized the lecturer assigned to teach this course, the authority to undertake the purchase of 2 simulation programmes in the second year of the programme, relevant to Hospitality & Tourism – Amadeus and Sabre to enhance the teaching and student experience.



### 3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

#### Findings

The Faculty members consist of two (2) PhD holders, five (5) Master's Degree holders and 3 Bachelor's Degree holders. They all teach at a level which is at least one lower than their qualifications; thus, no compliance issues are raised.

#### Strengths

The existing staff qualifications and experience are well-diversified within the hospitality and tourism sectors which is an asset to the new programme.

There are clear procedures in place for the evaluation of teaching and module delivery.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Teaching within each module could be more explicitly linked to the research and/or experience of the teaching team. As some of the Staff members have the qualification and experience in air transport, the EEC recommends introducing air transport management elements either within the "Introduction to the Hospitality & Tourism Industry", or within the "Introduction to Management" module. This could also open new fields of opportunities for the students.
- Even though it is not a requirement for a 2-year Diploma, all staff should be more involved in research to understand the evolving requirements of the hospitality and tourism industry and contextualise their teaching accordingly.
- The EEC encourages the College to invite recognised visiting teaching staff from HEIs in Cyprus and abroad to participate in the study programme. Moreover, the ratio of full/part timers should increase in the years to come to further the development of the programme.
- To strengthen the faculty, the programme can enhance academic and professional collaborations within and outside the College. For example, to develop academic partnerships within the Erasmus+ framework.

#### **The Evaluation Team rated this section as substantially compliant.**

The Team commented positively on the diversity of the Faculty within the Hospitality and Tourism Sectors. And the evaluation for teaching and module delivery.

Taking into consideration the comments and suggestions of the team regarding Areas of Improvement, please note the following amendments:

- 1) Elements of Air Transport Management have been added to the Introduction to the Hospitality & Tourism Management Industry. See Annex A
- 2) Although not required for the Diploma programme. the College has developed a Research Committee and has now put into place policies to encourage and assist faculty in undertaking research such as time release and economic assistance. Also, in accordance with our Strategic

the hiring of more Faculty active in research, this will develop the college as a research centre and encourage and assist other faculty in their research efforts.

- 3) Once the programme is running, the college will invite recognized visiting teaching staff from other HEI's to participate in the study programme. As the programme develops more full time Faculty will be needed and this will assist in the development of the programme.
- 4) In general and in compliance with our strategic plan, the college has received grants for students and staff mobility and VET training this year through Erasmus +, for current students registered on existing programmes. This will enhance partnerships and encourage networking within the Erasmus + framework. Obviously the college plans to increase collaborations within and outside the College through more mobilities and training programmes that would be relevant to this programme, once the programme is approved and running.

#### 4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

##### Findings

- The College has not yet enrolled any students in the Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management. The objectives set by the College are well communicated for the students' academic progress, counselling, mobility, etc.
- The one (1) student interviewed by the EEC was a Cypriot enrolled in the hairdressing programme; she expressed her satisfaction from the academic delivery and support services of the College.

##### Strengths

- The College has extensive experience in managing different academic and professional programmes. Moreover, the number of students has increased over the last few years and the College is adapting accordingly (recruitment of new academic staff, new stakeholders, etc.).
- The admission requirements for the study programme are clearly communicated to potential applicants.
- The students' prior preparation/education background is assessed for both Cypriot and international students.
- The College provides students with personalized counselling and other services, especially in the case of international students.
- The College organizes professional meetings, workshops and career fairs to strengthen the employability prospects of its students.

##### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC would like to make the following minor recommendations/changes:

As this is a newly proposed programme, it is essential for the College to ensure a fair recognition of its qualification. This includes periods of study and prior learning, formal and informal learning to ensure student progress and promote international mobility.

##### **The Evaluation Team rated this section as fully compliant.**

The Team noted that the College has extensive experience in managing a variety of programmes. It also commented positively on the clear admissions requirements, assessment of qualifications and services offered to the students including career fairs to improve employability prospects of students.

The College adopts a clear APL process to ensure formal and informal learning of potential students is recognized and assists in their promotion. International mobility is already promoted and organized in other programmes. Upon approval of this programme, students studying under this programme will have the opportunity for mobility through the Erasmus + programme.

## 5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

### Findings

In general, the College provides adequate and readily accessible resources for the conduct of the new Diploma programme. The teaching and learning facilities, aids and equipment are sufficient and student friendly but also compliant with the requirements of people with reduced mobility.

### Strengths

- Interviewed academic and administration staff were enthusiastic and supportive of the College. They all argued that the College has substantially improved the quality of its provision over the last five years both academically and physically (i.e. in terms of infrastructure) thus substantially raising the overall level of student experience.
- As discussed previously the use of the Atlantis Cafe on site which will be used for training also offers an excellent venue for meetings and leisure activities for students.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC would like to make the following minor recommendations/changes:

- In particular, the EEC believes that there is room for improvement with respect to the availability of library resources. At present, the list of books in hospitality and tourism in physical form is rather limited. The College currently subscribes to prestigious databases such as Ebsco and Questia; however, members of staff need to be properly trained to maximise the potential from the use of these resources.
- The current provision of workstations is rather outdated and moreover, extra students will put pressure on the existing facilities. The College needs to start investing in new computers.
- As mentioned in Section 2 of this report, the College needs to consider investing in at least one specialised hospitality software related to Hospitality and Tourism, e.g. Amadeus GDS.

### **The Evaluation Team rated this section as substantially compliant.**

The team commented on the improved quality of College provisions over the last 5 years, therefore substantially improving the student experience.

Taking into consideration the comments and suggestions of the team regarding Areas of Improvement, please note the following:

- 1) Even though the team evaluated the College with substantial compliance regarding resources, the College will purchase more textbooks in physical form specifically related to the courses on this programme. The College budget allows for the continuous purchase of resources.
- 2) All new academic staff undertake orientation at the beginning of each semester where necessary to train on Moodle and the library system. Current Faculty can also attend to revise their skills

knowledge where needed. These training seminars are offered on a regular basis and where necessary on a need basis.

- 3) The upgrading of workstations is already in the budget for the next academic year irrespective of student numbers.
- 4) The College has given authority to the proposed lecturer to purchase 2 specific software related to this programmes needs (Amadeus and Sabre) in the second year.

## 6. Additional for distance learning programmes (*ALL ESG*)

## 7. Additional for doctoral programmes (*ALL ESG*)

## 8. Additional for joint programmes (*ALL ESG*)



## B. Conclusions and final remarks

In conclusion, this Diploma programme in Hospitality and Tourism Management aims to provide students with a good understanding of issues associated with management and organisational aspects of hospitality and tourism together with basic principles that support the industry. More specifically, it aims to guide the student to a professional area that would be appealing to him/her as a future career; to equip graduates with a solid academic, technological, and intellectual background for academic and/or career advancements; to provide students with a solid foundation of management skills, marketing and sales, human resource management, finance, operations, information technology, and to help students develop their critical thinking and refine their analytical and decision-making skills. The learning outcomes of the individual modules are well-structured and balanced in most cases. Nonetheless, some of the generic business modules often overlook the specific context and requirements of the tourism and hospitality sectors and, therefore, do not provide sufficient contextualized knowledge. The modules' list of references should also be updated and include journal articles with contemporary methodologies and topics where possible. In this context, the College library should also invest in maximizing the potential of electronic and other resources; this is important given the aspirations of the College's management team to offer a full Bachelor's programme in Hospitality and Tourism Management at a later stage should the Diploma programme prove successful.

There is enough information to gain a comprehensive picture of the assessment strategy. Assessment appears traditional - in most cases, there is a mid-term assessment and a final exam. There is no explicit reference to group work strategy. There is no mention of any advanced assessment methodologies or pedagogic strategies. The number of credits attached to each module is standard. There is some evidence of relevant research activity or culture among some of the involved members of academic staff, who are engaged in research activities with modest publication or other related outputs. Publications by members of academic staff in the areas of hospitality and tourism should be actively encouraged by the College to better inform the curriculum and contextualise teaching accordingly.

Having the above in mind, the EEC believes that the programme is overall substantially compliant with the required standards in each of the pillars discussed in the report. The EEC recommendations are meant to be constructive and set the fundamentals to make the programme fully compliant with minor amendments/changes. Moreover, they should not prove difficult for the College to implement if swift and genuine efforts are undertaken.

The College has taken into consideration the comments of the Evaluation team and in conclusion has made the following amendments to satisfy the requirements and become fully compliant in all areas:

- Generic Business modules now contain specific content to provide contextualized knowledge
- Modules have been amended and a new module added based upon the recommendations of the team (Spa and Wellness Management).
- ECTS have been added to the Internship
- Additional languages have been added to the pathway to give the students a choice and ECTS reduced for the overall language requirements.
- The list of Journal Articles in section 2 are now included for reference.

- Investment will be made in the College library to provide more resources
- Varying teaching methodologies will be applied and some amendments have been made to the course descriptions reflecting this.
- Even though not required for a Diploma programme, the College through the Research Committee encourages research and has hired more research active faculty in order to create a research culture.
- In line with the College budget and strategic plan, investment in resources is ongoing to improve the overall student experience.

**C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Mr. Michael Aresti	Executive Director	
Ms. Sharon Michael	Academic Director	
Dr. Roxana Michaelides	Programme Coordinator	

Date: 08/07/2019.....