Doc. 300.1.1

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report (Programmatic)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  Atlantis College

- **Town: Liopetri Ammochostos**

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

- **Department/ Sector:**
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

  In Greek:

  Διεύθυνση Επιχειρήσεων Φιλοξενίας και Τουρισμού

  In English:

   Hospitality and Tourism Management

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

- **Programme's status**
  New programme: Yes
  Currently operating: Choose an item.

A. Introduction

The evaluation of the Programme on Hospitality and Tourism Management of the Atlantis College was based on the report produced by the institution and sent by the CyQAA to the EEC. The virtual evaluation meetings took place on the 8th of September, 2020. The Atlantis College made several presentations and, as a result of them, more information was brought in to complement that offered by the report. Additionally, the EEC required further information and clarification about several areas of the report, namely those related to teaching staff, research, teaching programme and infrastructure. The Atlantis College made this information available, and, thus the present report elaborates and discusses on material included in the report and on information supplied by the College during and afterwards the meetings.

All virtual meetings took place in a warm, clear and fruitful atmosphere, and the College's directors were always open and keen to accept the EEC recommendations.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Carlos Costa	Full Professor	University of Aveiro
Nevenka Cavlek	Full Professor	University of Zagreb
Theodoros A. Stavrinoudis	Associate Professor	University of the Aegean
Dimitris Hajisavvas	Student	Cyprus University of Technology

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development
(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

1.1 Policy for quality assurance
1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
1.3 Public information
1.4 Information management

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

The College has implemented a quality assurance structure to comply with national accreditation system which enables continuous improvement through self-evaluation and action planning. It collects quantitative and qualitative data through periodic surveys in order to ensure feedback from key stakeholder groups, including students and employers, for quality improvement and policy making.

Quality Assurance for each programme of study is organised through regular monitoring and review (in charge of the Programme Evaluation Committee), course reports, annual monitoring evaluation report (AMER), faculty self-appraisal, pear review, student evaluations, and student satisfaction survey.

The College ensures academic integrity and honesty by preventing and detecting plagiarism by using several freely available internet programmes. Unfortunately, due to its small size it cannot afford tools like turnitin.

1.2. Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

The proposed study programme on *Hospitality and Tourism Management* (4 year Bachelor of Arts degree – 240 ECTS, plus an optional Foundation Year) is a new programme in English language offered by Atlantis College which already runs 2 years, Diploma programme with 120 ECTS under the same title. It aims to satisfy needs of those interested in a career in tourism and hospitality field. Being located in one of the most touristic areas of Cyprus, there is a constant demand for this kind of a programme on the market. According to the written statement in the provided documentation and oral presentation by the management directors, the programme offers comprehensive and professional education comprising of programme-specific basic studies, a bachelor thesis and internship.

The major objective of the programme is to prepare graduates for managerial and supervisory positions in the hospitality and tourism sector. It is planned to be delivered in a full-time mode over ~~three~~ four years with obligatory placement period. The programme is set to target domestic and international students. The overall learning objectives of the programme are clearly defined and are in line with the institutional strategy. The programme

is designed to cover both managerial part and practical part. The latter is ensured through continues cooperation with employers in the hospitality and tourism field. The structure of the curricula is set to cover general business courses, specialized courses in hospitality and tourism and elective courses (foreign languages: German, French and Russian). Special emphasis is also given to develop a range of skills and techniques, personal qualities and attributes for a successful performance in the workplace for an immediate contribution to employment.

Although there is no doubt that a lot of effort and enthusiasm has been put in creation of the programme, the EEC members are concerned about the possible performance of the programme due to quite superficially set content, learning objectives and learning outcomes (LO) for the majority of courses. For illustrative purposes only let us mention just few inconsistences: *Introduction to the hospitality and tourism industry* (objectives and course LOs are mixed; the course content is dominantly oriented to hospitality and superficially to tourism); the courses *Structure of Tourism* and *Leisure and Recreation* have absolutely the same learning outcomes, but most of the learning outcomes for both courses do not correspond to the course content). Moreover, the content of the course *Structure of Tourism* is not adequately structured and it needs a thorough academic scrutiny. It repeats many parts of the content already covered in the course *Introduction to the hospitality and tourism industry.* The course *Sustainable Tourism* does not cover all pillars of tourism sustainability. Bibliography is not properly listed and it is outdated.

The course *English for Tourism* – the use of the term "Hotel Tourism" is not adequate. English for tourism should apply terminology used in hospitality and tourism, and additionally not just "develop college level vocabulary related to the field of hotel studies" (whatever is meant by that). An error also occurred in marked languages of instruction in the case of elective courses: German and Russian – language of instruction is English.

In many cases LOs of the courses are more extensive than the proposed course content. The above-mentioned examples lead to the conclusion that the College lacks experts for creation and delivery of such proposed curriculum.

1.3. Public information
Public information regarding the programme cannot be introduced because the programme has not been accredited yet.

1.4. Information management

The same applies to the information management (key performance indicators, profile of students, student progression rate, etc.).

Strengths

- Location of the College and well positioned other six programmes

- Already well-established processes for a regular programme monitoring at the College level

- Excellent connections with the business world by the most esteemed faculty members

- Excellent opportunities for internships

- Possibility to take advantage of cross-disciplinary learning opportunities through other Atlantis College programmes

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Development of all aspects of offered courses (objectives, LOs, content). Implementation of a comprehensive and integrated LO system with appropriate linkages from programme level to course level down to the assessment regime.

- Necessary implementation of clear guidelines on syllabi writing.

- Introduction of course *Ethics in Tourism and Hospitality,* or at least inclusion of ERS (ethics, responsibility and sustainability) within course outline where appropriate.

- Enhance the international student and staff mobility

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	Non-compliant
1.3	Public information	Not applicable
1.4	Information management	Not applicable

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

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

2.1 Process of teaching and learning

The program under evaluation addresses a very interesting and rather competitive study field but there are several, mainly academic, limitations as far as the offering of a successful curriculum is concerned. The learning experience of the proposed program, in its current form, is not level-appropriate to a four-year bachelor degree. Therefore, the EEC shares the opinion that the College must implement several changes to improve the programme's teaching and learning process.

During the on-line presentations it became obvious that the teamwork spirit is robust among the faculty, the administrative staff and the students, and that the direct communication between teachers and students is encouraged, thus allowing the constant cooperation and fruitful exchange of ideas and opinions. The small number of students facilitates this policy. Additionally, the College offers special attention to the students with different abilities or/and learning difficulties on an individual basis. The students evaluate the teachers and the courses regularly, thus offering a valuable feedback to the teachers and the management as well.

The College's reaction to the Covid-19 crisis was positive, enabling the courses attendance via on-line platform (after training teachers and students on the methodology of distance learning).

Overall, part of the teaching (mainly has to do with the teaching staff qualifications in the Tourism and Hospitality Management field), learning and practical training procedures offered to the students must be updated in order to adapt to the needs of students of a four-years bachelor degree in hospitality and tourism management (please refer to the comments – recommendations for improvement in this and other sections of the report).

2.2 Practical training

The practical training procedures offered to the students are adequate, allowing the provision of a satisfactory learning experience to an international students' audience. The geographical proximity of the College to a great number of well-established tourism enterprises supports the internship and the practical training offering. The College might consider useful to provide a compulsory assignment during the students' internship.

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2.3 Student assessment

The students' assessment procedures (on a College level) are clear and available to a great extent on the College's website. The students are well informed and aware of the assessment issues and requirements.

Strengths

- existence of a good networking with business world in the nearby area of Agia Napa, which is a mass tourism destination with a great number of national and international hospitality enterprises present in the area, thus giving more opportunities for: a) industrial placement to the students, and b) guest lectures from executives
- cooperation with the library of the University of Cyprus might be an opportunity towards supporting a rather weak research profile of the teaching staff
- constant engagement with the students is unveiled by a strong culture of cooperation and interactive learning experience. Students often get support from the teachers who are available to solve, alongside with the administrative staff, educational and practical issues they face. Teachers also act as mentors.
- students are very satisfied ("*happy*") with their studies in the College
- the College has established several satisfactory procedures in order to support students with insufficient academic performance
- availability of a range of learning activities and exposure to industry (guest speakers, industrial placement).

Areas of improvement and recommendations

In line with the above-mentioned comments, the following recommendations could improve the program offered:
- the use of antiplagiarism programmes is very important. It is suggested that single well-established software (Turnitin for example) should be employed, without overlooking the cost. Additional thoughts on this are needed in order to evaluate whether the tool will be enough to solve plagiarism problems.
- the current College's infrastructure is not satisfactory. The available infrastructure (only four classes, three of which can accommodate no more than 16 students) is a major drawback for the implementation of a four-year bachelor program
- the employment of more teaching and learning techniques is necessary in order to create a modern, more competitive and interactive learning environment for the students. Special emphasis must be placed on improving the research skills offered to students
- the College must encourage the participation of teachers and students in research projects in order to acquire more knowledge, experiences, and develop a research culture
- a compulsory assignment during the students' internship could be associated with more ECTS offering for the practical training

- the adaption of double grading could be useful. It will increase the feeling of fairness among the students and allow a more comprehensive grade procedure.

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	Partially compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

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

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

From the report and from the presentations that took place between the EEC and the College it is possible to conclude that the Atlantis College employs a large number of qualified teachers. However, it is found that for the new Programme on Hospitality and Tourism Management the staff available is not sufficient to support the functioning of a qualified programme. The Atlantis College includes a list of 15 teachers for the new programme, but only 3 of them have academic background in travel, hospitality and tourism. The others may be involved in the programme by teaching general subjects in areas such as languages and linguistics, accounting, management, marketing and law.

During the meetings the management of the Atlantic College suggested that more staff could be hired in the future, provided that the programme is accredited. The EEC then required fullcommitment that the new staff would be contracted in case the programme is accredited.

After the online meetings the Atlantis College sent a letter to the Agency where they argue that they could contract 3 more faculty members with a background in tourism and hospitality in the future.

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

As it was mentioned in the previous section, the report presented by the Atlantis College provides information about the teaching staff available for the programme. The EEC is convinced that the number and the background of the existing staff are not satisfactory to cover the area of hospitality and tourism. However, after the meeting the College sent a letter assuming a compromise to hire 3 more faculty members for the tourism and hospitality area.

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

The report does not provide solid and clear information about research, and in particular about a research centre. Additionally, the teaching staff included in the report does not produce research in tourism – they do not have relevant publications and research projects in the hospitality and tourism area. From the 15 staff members only 3 may be considered in the travel/hospitality/tourism area, and even those have not relevant publications in the field of tourism and/or hospitality.

It is a matter of fact that the Atlantis College is not a university. However, a minimum quality level of research production is required for every educational institution. Namely, the quality of teaching in the College will significantly depend on advances in areas such as research.

It should also be emphasised that the Atlantis library does not offer to students and staff databases to conduct fair research since SCOPUS, Web of Science and UN World Tourism Organizations databases are not available. These are important databases for both teaching and researching into travel, tourism and hospitality areas.

After the meeting the Atlantis College sent a letter assuming a /commitment of devoting 20,000 Euros for conferences and to subscribe to a database covering the hospitality and tourism area.

The EEC understands that these are significant steps forward towards creating better conditions for the functioning of the programme. However, it should be underlined that the College must establish a research plan emphasizing the objectives of the research centre, its members, time they should devote to research, and explain how the objectives of the research will be implemented in practice, and linked to teaching.

Strengths
- Qualified staff in general areas of management, languages and linguistics, engineering, etc.
- Willingness to contract new staff for hospitality and tourism

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The Atlantis College has a variety of teaching staff, covering several areas. However, the teaching staff with a background in Hospitality and Tourism Programme is not sufficient.
- The College has to hire more qualified staff and implement the compromises assumed with the EEC.
- After the meeting the College sent two letters to the EEC where they assume a compromise to hire 3 more faculty members in hospitality and tourism area to improve the quality of teaching and research in the institution. However, more details are needed on how this will be put into practice in the future.
- Is not clear whether a research centre does actually exist and how the policies and funding for research in the institution will be carried out in the future. A research centre has to be set up with clear research objectives, and clear outputs in terms of publications, projects and dissemination of information.
- The College has to make clear on how to associate research and teaching (in terms of making students more motivated and linked to the sector.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Partially compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Non-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**

4.1 Student admission

The College has not yet enrolled any students in the Tourism and Hospitality Management program (a four-year bachelor degree). Based on the application and the constructive meeting with (only) two students enrolled in another course of the College, it became clear that all the necessary information regarding the students' admission are clear and available (on a College level) in a sufficient and satisfactory way. The College's website is well designed, and the amount of information offered is generally considered satisfactory.

4.2 Student progression

The College has established clear regulations and procedures for the students' progression. These regulations are conveyed to students in a clear and transparent way. The College must take advantage of the Erasmus+ program in order to enrich the students' experiences and knowledge they acquire.

4.3 Student recognition & 4.4 Student certification

The College has established the necessary recognition and certification procedures and the students are informed accordingly. The students are provided with analytic certificates offering a clear acknowledgement of the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies.

Strengths

- the admission requirements and criteria are sufficient and clearly presented in the application
- the opportunity offered to students to transfer credits earned at other accredited colleges and universities is very positive
- availability of a very comprehensive internship logbook – containing every information required by the students
- implementation of a Quality Assurance System which aims to guarantee that the quality of the teaching program is well-documented, verifiable and assessable and the establishment of a number of committees: a) Quality Assurance Committee, b) Program Evaluation Committee c) Program Review Committee and d) Research Development Committee
- the students' assessment criteria and their contribution in the final assessment in every course are well established and clear to students

- the availability of a psychologist to support the students – on an appointment base - is crucial (having in mind a large number of international students) and might support freshmen, helping the College to reduce the dropout rate
- the College's website is updated and contains analytic information on supporting students with disabilities
- the students are satisfied with the welfare services offered
- the tuition fees are considered fair and affordable by the students
- the teachers/students ratio as well as the administrative staff/students ratio is very good, thus improving the educational experience. But more teaching staff in hospitality and tourism is needed
- the administrative staff is aware of the key statistics concerning the students (students' characteristics, dropout rate etc.).

Areas of improvement and recommendations
In line with the above-mentioned comments, the following recommendations could improve the program offered:
- the classes available cannot support the students' needs and the requirements of a four-year bachelor degree. The College must, at least, rent more premises – facilities
- more databases (i.e. Scopus and WoS), journals and books related to tourism and hospitality management must be available in the library in order to support students in their studies, research and assignments
- a substantial improvement in the learning outcomes of the programme's courses is necessary, that will favor the students' learning experience
- the students' and teachers' participation in Erasmus+ exchange programmes is an opportunity for them and must be further developed in the future
- the College must expose its students more to academic literature and research methodology. This is crucial for a four-year bachelor program
- the College must pay special attention to the high dropout rate (about 30%) and despite the objective causes (personal issues, homesickness) they must work on reducing this rate
- the teachers could participate in the admission – selection of the students.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Partially compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

Sub-areas

    5.1 Teaching and Learning resources
    5.2 Physical resources
    5.3 Human support resources
    5.4 Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

The report made available by the College and the virtual tour allow concluding that, overall, the Atlantis College provides students and staff with an infrastructure and facilities adjusted to the functioning of the programme. However, new space will be needed if the new degree is implemented.

The methods of teaching that will be offered by the new programme follow international standards. However, the College ought to improve student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching. In nowadays' world, and bearing in mind an increasing volatile and changing society, such methods may prepare students for a better future.

5.2 Physical resources

The premises and the IT infrastructure are at present adjusted to the needs. New spaces are needed if the new programme is approved.

The library is overall accustomed, but it is recommended that more hospitality and tourism bibliography should be purchased by the college. Atlantis College should also buy databases from where students could find indexed publications (e.g. SCOPUS and Web of Science), and tourism documents (UNWTO database). Such information is also vital to support the expansion and quality of research.

5.3 Human support resources

The College offers students mentoring activities.

The number and qualifications of the administrative staff is adjusted to the needs. Staff performs both academic and integrative functions, which are critical for international students to adjust to the new culture.

5.4 Student support

The Atlantis College offer students open sessions for them to gain knowledge about the school facilities and to allow good adjustment to the island.

> During the meetings students unveiled high levels of satisfaction with the College.
> The teaching methodologies follow normal educational standards. However, student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching should be more encouraged in the future.

Strengths

- Fair infrastructure and IT, but there is a need for further improvement if the new programme is going to be approved.

- The College offers students mentoring activities

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- More international exchange mobility programmes should be offered by the College
- Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching should be utilised more frequently in the future

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Partially compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

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

NOT APPLICABLE

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

NOT APPLICABLE

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

NOT APPLICABLE

C. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC has found that the Directors of the Atlantis College are committed to launch the new programme on Hospitality and Tourism Management. It is found that at present the College has adjusted infrastructure and facilities to run the present degrees.

However, the EEC is also of the opinion that much has to be done if the new programme on Hospitality and Tourism Management is to be approved. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the items that the College has to develop. Among other aspects, the following areas ought to be improved:

- (i)   The learning objectives and outcomes of the programme have to be redesigned and improved;
- (ii)   Better plagiarism software has to be acquired;
- (iii)   The infrastructure is not enough for the new programme;
- (iv)   The teaching staff is not sufficient and does not have adequate academic and scientific practical background in the teaching core area;
- (v)   A research centre has to be created and linked to the teaching programme. Aditionally, staff has to produce qualified publications in the core area of the study programme;
- (vi)   The students must have access to indexed databases (e.g. SCOPUS, WoS, UNWTO).

The EEC shares the opinion that the College will very much benefit from a redesigned programme and from the implementation of the suggested improvements and therefore strongly encourages the College to resubmit their programme proposal in due time.

D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Carlos Costa	
Nevenka Cavlek	
Theodoros A. Stavrinoudis	
Dimitris Hajisavvas	

Date: 2020.09.18