

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: Date.

- **Higher Education Institution:**

Larnaca College

- **Town: Larnaca**

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

In Greek:

Πτυχίο Διοίκησης Επιχειρήσεων συν ένα προπαρασκευαστικό πρόγραμμα ενός έτους (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, BBA)

In English:

Business Administration plus an optional foundation year (4 years, 240 ECTS, BBA)

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

- **Programme's status:** New



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) 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

The application as well as presentations and dialogues at the (remote) site visit provided us with a very clear understanding of the proposed study programme. Larnaca College is offering a Bachelor of Business Administration (4 Years/8 Semesters, 240 ECTS, BBA) plus an optional foundation year in both English and Greek. The study programme offers specializations/pathways in Management; Hospitality & Tourism Management; and Accounting and Financial Management. The programme fits very well with other study programmes offered. Larnaca College offers the students flexibility due to the fact that they can choose between a semester model and a modular model. The semester model follows a classical design for a four years full-time study, i.e. the programme covers 8 semesters (with 2 semesters per year), corresponding to 30 ECTS per semester. The participants in the (remote) site visit demonstrated very good understanding of the target groups of the various specializations as well as of the market situation due to a thorough feasibility study. The programme has been developed with inputs from a number of sources, incl. experience from e.g. an internal program committee, faculty, students, graduates of other programmes, industry contacts, and the newest trends within various professional fields. All participants in the site visit showed great and convincing enthusiasm about the programme.

Strengths

- Through a thorough feasibility study and engagement with stakeholders, Larnaca College has a very good understanding of the market demand for their intended students and the newest trends within various fields.
- Programme goals, learning outcomes and course contents were thoroughly described in the application.
- The programme's academic standard is clearly supported by faculty members that are active researchers.
- The programme allows students to develop their theoretical and practical skills and knowledge within their chosen specialization, both for the local and the global market.
- Larnaca College offers foundation modules to students that do not fulfill the requirements to start on the core modules.
- The structure of the programme is clear, and the modules have a logical sequence, i.e. first part for core modules and second part for concentration modules.
- The modules offered build on deep knowledge within the various fields of specialization.
- The programme offers the students flexibility to choose among a number of modules, as not all are required courses.
- The quality of the programme is monitored by continuous evaluations, and Larnaca College has good quality assurance in place.
- Larnaca College has a broad number of qualified faculty members.
- The modular model offers the student a number of entry points within each calendar year - and hereby flexibility for students who are full time employed.
- Students and faculty are offered the opportunity to broaden their international experience through the ERASMUS+ programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

• We (i.e. the EEC) acknowledge and appreciate that Larnaca College wants to provide their students with the opportunity to gain experience in the tourism industry, and therefore offers an internship/summer practicum and supports the activity with an internship coordinator and required activities. However, due to EU legislation all obligatory parts of a study programme must carry ECTS credit, as the ECTS system is made to inform students and other stakeholders about the workload timewise of the study programme. To ask students to complete 500 hours of practice during his/her studies as an obligatory Internship/ Summer Practicum that does not carry any ECTS is not acceptable and must be changed. We offer the following ideas:

1. Let the internship/summer practicum carry ECTS credit that reflects the 500 hours, i.e. 25- 28 hours per ECTS credit point;
2. Offer the students a choice between the internship/summer practicum and another activity (e.g. undertaking a research activity that involves collecting secondary (and primary) data on a certain industry/number of concrete business within and industry) that reflects the same amount of ECTS, summing up to 500 hours; or
3. Offer the internship/summer practicum as a voluntary activity, i.e. an extracurricular activity that is not carrying ECTS credits.

Larnaca College Response

Larnaca College has taken into consideration the ideas/suggestions made regarding the internship/summer practicum and has decided to adopt idea number 3. Therefore the internship/summer practicum for the specialization Hospitality and Tourism Management will be offered as a voluntary activity that is not carrying any ECTS.

• It was revealed at the online visit that Table 1 in the application was not fully reflecting the programme. Please update it and resubmit it.

Larnaca College Response

There was a typing error in Table 1. Please see attached the BBA application with the changes page 38 Table 1. This is to clarify that there is no undergraduate assignment for none of the specializations.

• Larnaca College states that the class size can be 8-80 students. We recommend that the College decides for a lower max. number of students per class, e.g. 25 or 30 students - and offers more sections if a module has more applicants. By such a policy the College can better gain a competitive advantage due to small classes and the teaching style - and communicate it to relevant stakeholders.

Larnaca College Response

Larnaca College acknowledges and respects these recommendations and we will abide by the CYQAA regulations of student numbers in the class. We have explained the rules and regulations of the CYQAA in regards to the number of students allowed in class in undergraduate programmes of study which is 8 students minimum and 80 students maximum per class.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Findings

The faculty demonstrated awareness of appropriate pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning for the Programme, including lecture inputs, discussion and group work. There was a strong articulation of aims of the Programme, informing the learning outcomes and assessment strategies.

Assessments appear to be appropriate and overseen by the College's wider management and governance procedures.

We heard evidence of processes in place for feedback, and student complaints, in line with the structure of the programme and the College.

There appears to be strong management oversight of the Programme, alongside well-developed pedagogical support amongst colleagues.

The teaching methodology and processes are comprehensive and well considered, and support the intellectual development and progression of students across the Programme, in line with the learning outcomes.

The College has invested in modern educational technologies. From our meetings with staff, we heard evidence that these had been very useful during the Covid19 period.

Strengths

There is a distinctive and welcome emphasis on developing critical thinking among students.

We noted commitment and a strong team spirit among the teaching staff.

The staff also have strong enthusiasm for their research and scholarly activities. We note that the College has invested in this aspect of staff development and the Committee very much welcomes this significant institutional commitment. It should help differentiate the College in the market, to provide an excellent basis for staff development, and bring value to the quality of the teaching provision.

Teaching and learning materials (including access to online sources) appear to be modern and well resourced. We welcome the College's continuing investment in its various academic subscriptions which should enable staff and students to access state of the art materials in support of the Programme.

The College's management and committee structure is designed to support appropriate delivery of module material and maintain consistent quality standards.

The students were very positive about the quality of teaching and level of support that they receive from teaching staff, including clarity about how to access personal feedback and developmental guidance on their work.

Communication with faculty members and the wider administrative team seems to be effective and embedded in the culture of the College.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

We understand that part of the motivation for this Programme is to attract local students. It is important that this is not achieved at the expense of the experience and support for international students. Furthermore, the content and focus of the teaching should equip all students for engaging with the global context of business and management. The linkages with local networks are excellent, but we see scope for internationalization as well.

Larnaca College Response

Apparently Larnaca College has linkage with local networks and at the same time with International networks (such as International Hotel Chains). However, we have very clearly explained to the EEC that it is very difficult for students from Third Countries to travel to other EU nations. Nevertheless, our students find employment in local and international business. For example, once a year Larnaca College and more precisely the department of Hospitality and Tourism Management organises a job fair where national and international business corporations participate and our students have the opportunity for part time or full time employment.

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Findings

We met with 10 out of 29 teaching/faculty members (the missing members were said to be on vacations). We had a comprehensive view of the entire teaching staff of Larnaca College. Most of the faculty members we met had a tenure of many years. The majority of them holds PhD degrees, and many of them hold these and other degrees from foreign institutions. They all seem engaged 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. they have taken into account the suggestions of the previous accreditation/evaluation and most 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 Larnaca College for a long 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, they mentioned that there are enough touchpoints with practice. Only permanent faculty exists. 80% of them are full time faculty members. 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 BBA students discussed in the classroom. Finally, although the academic staff of Larnaca College does research, we would encourage them to continue with the research process, attend conferences, organise actual research seminars in which faculty would present research papers

Larnaca College Response

We have emphasized on many occasions that there is a strong interaction with other universities and practitioners from outside Cyprus. We have indicated that we have invited guest lecturers such as the Professor Dimitris Koutolas from the University of Patra, Greece who gave a relevant lecture about Hospitality and Tourism Management. We have also invited Professor Vassilis Tsiangos from the University of Kavala who has informed our Faculty about quality procedures in Education. Additionally, we had a guest Professor from the Escola Superior de Tecnologias in Portugal, Sofia Coelho who gave a lecture about the

Entrepreneurial orientation, business network, and performance: The specific Case of Portuguese Small and medium enterprise of family businesses (SMEs). Previous and upcoming events are published on our Website.

Larnaca College takes research very seriously. We have a Research Office in place and an annual research review, the Larnaca College Review with the contribution of Larnaca College Faculty. It is also important to highlight that Larnaca College participates in seminars/conferences for the last 2 consecutive years. Our Professors participated in the 9th International Conference on ‘Tourism and Sustainable Development’, in Kathmandu Nepal in 2018. Additionally, in 2019 Larnaca College was represented by a member of faculty at the APacCHRIE & EuroChrie Joint Conference School of Hotel and Tourism Management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Needless to say, Larnaca College will continue with the engagement in Research and Conference Participation.

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Findings

Larnaca College has very clear and transparent regulations, policies, processes and criteria for student admission, incl. transfer students. Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression are in place. Larnaca 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 certificates that clearly acknowledge the knowledge they have gained during the studies

Strengths

- Larnaca College is doing very good expectation alignment by being transparent about admission procedures and about progress monitoring.
- Larnaca 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

- As mentioned in Section 1, the internship/summer practicum needs to be changed, and the changes should be clearly communicated to students prior to study start.

Larnaca College Response

See Section 1

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

Findings

As noted earlier this was a remote 'visit', but from the materials and virtual tour supplied the infrastructure standards are very good. The students spoke positively about the library and IT resources and of how the College responded supportively and during the time of the Covid19 outbreak. It is therefore important that such learning and contingency planning are incorporated into the strategic and operational planning of the College. This should include consideration of how it can continue to support student-centred learning and flexible modes of provision during times of lockdown or social distancing.

From our remote inspection of physical resources (premises, libraries, study facilities and so on) we conclude that the standards are adequate to support the programme.

We met with a dedicated administrative staff who clearly contribute to the student experience and who support college life, beyond the Programme. Administrative systems appear to be well designed, with clear structures and roles.

It is important that the College recognizes the need to maintain capacity in the administration team if the programme is successful in recruiting more students. The plan for investment in this area should include provision for pastoral and welfare services for students.

Strengths

We were impressed by the developmental progress achieved by the College. It has succeeded in nurturing administrative and teaching teams who have a strong commitment to the College and its students.

The students are aware of how to access different support services in the College and value the extra curricular opportunities on offer.

We heard compelling examples from the students about the practical help they had received from College staff during the pandemic, including help addressing welfare and financial challenges.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The recruitment targets for the programme are considerable and will increase demand for academic materials and IT resources and support, as well as placing more demands on teaching and administrative staff. It is therefore important the College recognizes the potential for increased demand in its strategic, operational and budgetary processes.

The ongoing uncertainty faced by all education institutions about 'face to face' teaching postCovid19 means that the College should ensure that it has robust contingencies in place to ensure its students can continue to learn remotely at any times when this becomes necessary.

Larnaca College Response

We have encompassed the potential of increase in demand and this is also reflected in our feasibility study. Therefore, Larnaca College in order to face the challenges of the ongoing uncertainty faced by all Education Institutions regarding the Covid pandemic we have purchased an additional online platform MS 365



(Teams) to ensure that our students can continue to learn remotely efficiently at any time when this becomes necessary. We have also increased the number of Electronic Libraries such as EBSCO, EMERALD, QUESTIA and other electronic databases in order to enrich the learning experience and support all students remotely.



6. Additional for distance learning programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A



7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

N/A



8. Additional for joint programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The College engages with the work of the Agency and the EEC with an ethos of learning and improvement and it is evident that it has responded well and constructively to previous EEC visits. This is pleasing and the College should be congratulated for working so developmentally.

Strengths

The program of study is well-designed and delivered in line with its objectives and the College's strategy. The programme provides an appropriate blend of theoretical and practice-oriented content. We saw very good levels of commitment among management, teaching and administrative staff. The programme's academic standard is supported by faculty members that are active researchers.

The programme allows students to develop their theoretical and practical skills and knowledge within their chosen specialization, both for the local and the global market.

Through engagement with various relevant stakeholders, the College has built up a robust understanding of market demand. It is evident that the Programme is being proposed on the basis of planning and consultation.

The programme is also supported by the College's foundation modules to help students prepare for the core modules.

The structure of the programme is clear, and the modules have a logical sequence, i.e. first part for core modules and second part for concentration modules.

Areas for Improvement

The most significant areas for attention and action in our findings relates to Section 1 of this Report.

We are not content that it is appropriate to oblige students to undertake (500 hours of) a summer practicum without this being reflected in ECTS credits. We provide several ways in which this could be addressed, including awarding ECTS credits for this activity; making the practicum optional and offering an alternative (credit-bearing) research activity or similar; or making the internships purely extra curricular and voluntary. We identify this as a significant design element that needs to be re-considered.

The College needs to continue its support for faculty members' research and professional development, so that the programme can benefit from this work, and that the College can continue to develop. In particular, it is important to continue to support opportunities for staff to pursue research that can be reflected in the teaching provision. In addition, it could further develop its use of visiting staff to further develop capacity and enhance provision.

If student numbers grow as anticipated, the College needs to be realistic in its resourcing of the teaching and administrative staff in support of the programme.

In addition, we feel that the projected maximum class size of 80 students is too high a number. Learning outcomes, teaching quality and student experience would be better supported through capping class sizes at a lower number. This would also help the marketing of the programme.



Larnaca College Response

We would like to express our sincere appreciation of your diligent efforts to promote and establish good practices involving higher education in Cyprus. In addition, we are appreciative of the open dialogue and constructive feedback of the external evaluation committee's recent virtual visit to our campus. Their expertise is highly valued.

We are delighted with the content of the feedback report and note that the committee was very happy with the make-up of our program. We have carefully considered and have accepted the recommendations made by the external evaluation committee and are working diligently to implement best practices noted in the feedback report. We recognize the value of external evaluation in improving our internal practices and will continue to refer to the feedback report as a point of reference for our program.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Position</i> | <i>Signature</i> |
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