



GRADUATE SCHOOL/OUT/042019/6897

Nicosia, 12/04/2019

To: The Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA)

Subject: Response to the External Evaluation Report for the new Program of Study – Master's in Digital Cultural Heritage

Dear CYQAA council members,

Below please find our response to the report of the External Evaluation Committee for the referenced Master's Program in Digital Cultural Heritage, prepared upon their on-site visit to The Cyprus Institute on the 10th of January 2019. We would like to thank the Committee for their constructive comments and suggestions that greatly helped us to improve the Program. All the points of the report that warranted attention are presented below followed by our response.

Yours sincerely,

Costas N. Papanicolas

President of The Cyprus Institute



1. EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING WORK- AVAILABLE RESOURCES

1.1.1 The student admission requirements to the Program of study, are based on specific regulations which are adhered to in a consistent manner.

Critique: *The Program is explicitly very broad in scope and hence in intake (background of candidates). However, the requirement for very high achievement at the level of whatever qualification was explicit in the meetings is not clearly indicated in the documents. This is also important for clarity of rejection. Is high achievement in a science degree equally valuable to high achievement in an arts degree?*

Response: All candidates are evaluated by the Admissions Committee on a case-by-case basis considering, in addition to grades in previous degrees, a strong CV showing experience, engagement and activities in the subject area, English language certificates and strong letters of support. As this is a truly interdisciplinary program, admission criteria are defined on the basis of equal opportunities for all applicants regardless of their academic background and related field of specialization.

1.1.3.4 The procedures for the fulfillment of undergraduate and postgraduate assignments / practical training.

Critique: *Although the Course Handbook provides examples of assignments they are missing details such as word count. Some types of assignment are not included in the examples e.g. a placement. Examples of and links between learning objectives, assignment criteria and generic grading criteria are not provided.*

Response: The Course Handbooks have been updated in order to provide the required information (see page 4 of DCH 401 and page 5 of DCH 402). Overall the strategy for linking learning objectives and students' evaluations are based on the Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom, B., 1956. *A taxonomy of cognitive objectives*. New York: McKay), which identifies knowledge-based goals (theoretical and methodological knowledge), skills-based goals (how-to and applied knowledge) and affective goals (values, attitudes, and interests).

Examples of linking between learning objectives and assessments criteria of DCH 402 are shown below:

Learning objective	Examples of Assessments
Build a scientific inquiry based on digital technologies.	<u>Final exam essay (max. 300 words):</u> Evaluate the soundness of the chosen digital technology and its suitability to solve the inquired research question.
Assess most adequate digital approach to solve a given archaeological research question.	<u>Final exam essay (max. 300 words):</u> Assess, based on a digital approach, an archaeological research hypothesis.
Conduct SWOT analysis before choosing the digital strategy for solving an	<u>Assignment essay (max. 500 words):</u> Based on your chosen thesis subject, describe the research



archaeological research question.	pipeline adopted for gathering data, archiving, interpreting and disseminating it.
Understand fundamental principles in digital data acquisition, archiving, interpretation and dissemination of a Cultural Heritage project.	<u>Final exam essay (max. 300 words)</u> : Design a research project along its typical pipeline, detailing the chosen technologies at each of its steps.
Have a diachronic perspective on the history of computing and its impact on Cultural Heritage research.	<u>Assignment essay (500 words)</u> : Describe how technological developments have had an impact on a given topic on the Cultural Heritage domain.
Understand main international Charters related to the subject, such as the London Charter.	<u>Laboratory assignment (hands-on project)</u> : Design a small project related to the 3D reconstruction of an archaeological site taking into consideration the London Charter Principles.
Get familiar with most common applications of digital technologies in Cultural Heritage and critically assess case studies.	<u>Final exam essay (max. 300 words)</u> : Examine the Rome Reborn project and assess the choice of chosen technologies in achieving its educational goals.
Evaluate ethical aspects and IPR in Digital Cultural Heritage.	<u>Assignment essay (500 words)</u> : Critically assess the relationship between a physical museum object and its 3D digital and physical replicas, from an IPR perspective.
Grasp the basics of creative industries and Cultural Heritage.	<u>Laboratory assignment (hands-on project)</u> : design an app for the re-use of an online museum collection in creating cultural tourism walking paths.

1.1.3.5 The procedures for the conduct and the format of the examinations and for student assessment.

Critique: *Example learning objectives are given at some points in the Course Handbook but these are not constructively aligned to criteria. The EQMS gives some further detail on assessment but does not link to generic grading criteria or a list of assessment criteria. Program level learning objectives (e.g. on Page 13 of Program Handbook) are not linked to these either.*

Response: We have streamlined the assessment criteria for different types of assessment across all Master's Programs (see EQMS ANNEX 1). We have also proceeded to clearly link the learning objectives with the assessment types, at both the individual courses level (please see page 4 of DCH 401 and page 5 of DCH 402) and the overall Program level (page 16). We make a distinction between theoretical knowledge to be acquired (as a learning objective) and assessed through a written examination of essay-type questions and practical knowledge (as a learning objective), assessed through the evaluation of a digital product (e.g. a 3D model, an app, etc.). Consequently, students are assessed along three main categories: theoretical knowledge (assessed through written exams essays), practical



knowledge (assessed through evaluation of a digital product developed by the student), and assessment of the student's overall performance in class presentations, teamwork and laboratory experimentations along with each student's placement performance (assessed through a written self-evaluation and evaluation of the host institution).

1.1.3.6 The effective provision of information to the students and the enhancement of their participation in the procedures for the improvement of the educational process.

Critique: *Building on the previous two comments, the students could be provided with a clearer 'map' of their assessment journey from the micro level of grading of one assessment through to the overall award of a classification for the degree. The Course Handbook indicates methods for students to provide feedback. This could be enhanced.*

Response: A clear map of the assessment journey has been included in the Program Handbook (see page 17 of updated Program Handbook). Moreover, for each course the relevant handbook provides information on the assessment process (see indicative examples for courses DCH 401 & 402). Students provide feedback on the overall learning experience in the class, laboratory instrumentation and related work, placement experience and overall student life at the Cyl campus, through evaluation forms that are filled out and submitted upon completion of each course. Individual interviews with selected students are also conducted by the Graduate School, in order to maximize the quality of feedback information received from students thus ensuring efficient monitoring of teaching staff performance and the best possible and timely response to needs and challenges. The Cyprus Institute's Internal Quality Committee of the Graduate School includes a student representative. The committee's central role is safeguarding the quality of education provided at the Institute, by ensuring that proper implementation of the quality assurance standards and assessment procedures specified by the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

1.2.4 The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance, are clear, adequate, and known to the students.

Critique: *As per notes for section 1.1.3 above, reducing the number of learning objectives throughout could help here, in terms of the students' understanding, minimizing work for staff and enabling flexibility. In addition, we believe that there are too many assessments and too much emphasis on exams. Assessments might also be more diverse e.g. capitalizing on the opportunities of the digital. We understand that there is limited scope for changing this but if possible, we propose summative assessment is reduced relative to formative.*

Response: The Quality Assurance Agency strongly encourages written exams in each Master's level course. Nevertheless, the proposed assignments are quite diverse as they evaluate a broad range of student activities and performance including, for example laboratory work on the development and application of digital technologies, thus effectively reducing summative assessment in relation to formative.



2. PROGRAM OF STUDY AND HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

2.1.2 The purpose and objectives of the Program and the learning outcomes are utilized as a guide for the design of the Program of study.

Critique: *As noted in 1.1.3 and 1.2.4 this could be more systematic, particularly in terms of alignment between design, purpose, objectives and learning outcomes.*

Response: The Program of study focuses on providing students with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge in the growing field of Digital Cultural Heritage, helping them to gain valuable laboratory skills as well as practical experience in potential future workplaces. Overall, the Program aspires to introduce and immerse students into a rich interdisciplinary research environment through inspiring teaching, rigorous assignments and direct engagement with Cultural Heritage stakeholders. To this effect, courses balance theoretical knowledge, acquired during frontal lectures and assessed via a written mid-term, final examination and practical experience (laboratory and placement work), assessed through class presentations and assignments (please see page 16 of Program Handbook and pages 4 and 5 respectively on Course Handbooks DCH 401 and DCH 402). Students will also benefit from their integration within research groups and interaction with researchers from a variety of disciplines in order to enrich their learning experience and help them acquiring the necessary skills for their future careers. We expect many of them to be engaged in ongoing research projects, both national and international.

2.1.6 The learning process is properly designed to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

Critique: *The learning design could be more explicit. The site visit made clear that the learning design (and hence implicit pathways through the Program) was dependent upon the unique learning environment (including the individual curation). However, this needs to be made clear to prospective applicants. Addressing the point raised in 2.1.2 would remove any further concerns with respect to the student experience.*

Response: We have provided a detailed response in 2.1.2. As stated in the critique, we believe that our unique learning research environment will be of great benefit to our students, who will be able to directly gain fieldwork and laboratory research experience, participate in multi-disciplinary research teamwork and benefit from the engagement of our international network of collaborators and partners.

2.2.1 The course curricula clearly define the expected learning outcomes, the content, the teaching and learning approaches and the method of assessing student performance.

Critique: *See related notes above regarding learning design and assessment. For example, the placement learning approach was more clearly demonstrated during the site visit and is less explicit in the documentation of the curricula. Similarly, the outcomes of the thesis are not clearly defined. In addition, the ways in which the teaching methods will deal with the diversity of skills in the context of the learning outcomes etc. are not detailed. For example, the Course Handbooks indicate specific software, methods, approaches and so on (e.g. spatial humanities approaches and tools) but we suggest that it could be clearer, and also*



what the impact will be for students of their differing levels of prior knowledge on the learning experience and assessment. See comment on 2.2.3.

Response: We have clarified in the Course Handbook the requirements for software literacy. A list of most commonly used software in Cultural Heritage (CH) will be provided to students once they have been accepted into the program and they have enrolled. Particular emphasis during laboratory work is given to fundamentals on reasoning with digital tools and software-based problem-solving of CH questions. The outcomes of the final thesis are sound proof of formulating a research question, designing and implementing the most appropriate methodology for solving it and demonstration of results, based on applied digital methods or theoretical grounds related to digital aspects.