

Doc. 300.1.2

# Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 16/10/2020

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
NEAPOLIS UNIVERSITY

- **Town:** PAFOS

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

**In Greek:**

Μεταπτυχιακό στην Τραπεζική Χρηματοοικονομική  
και στις Επενδύσεις (90 ECTS/1.5 έτη) Συμβατικό

**In English:**

MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance (90 ECTS,  
Postgraduate, 1.5 years) Conventional

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek, English
- **Programme's status:** 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 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].**

Let us first express our satisfaction for the very positive comments of the EEC as well as the productive suggestions and recommendations.

Since it is our firm belief and principle, that there is always room of improving the quality of the University and the said program, we hereby enclose our response to FULLY satisfy the EEC suggestions and recommendations, which we found very useful and productive.

## 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 for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance

In general, all the documentation provided to the committee was of reasonable quality and of sufficient detail. However, the internal evaluation report of the program was out of date causing significant confusion to the EEC. Some of the documentation used the future tense (“the [...] programme will be offered full-time” and “expected number of students”) even though the program is already offered for a number of years. This evaluation could have been an opportunity to revisit actual student numbers in the programmes, to compare them to expected student numbers and to reflect on the reasons why actual student numbers ended up being different from expected student numbers. We would have welcomed it if the University or School had provided more details such as information about the commencement of the program on offer, the number of students in the program, including details about the cohorts that had already graduated. For the latter, it would have been helpful to report information on student performance, student destination after graduation, etc. Given that the University has still relatively modest student numbers, it should not be too onerous to collect this type of information.

Concerning the MSc programme in Banking, Investment and Finance, students are enrolled for up to 1 1/2 year or 1 year if they choose “option 2”. The full amount of ECTS earned in the full-time programme is 90 units. Sixty ECTS correspond to the taught element of the program, 30 ECTS for the dissertation (or two elective modules).

Generally, the programme is well designed with overall program objectives that are in line with the institution's strategy and that have explicit intended learning outcomes. The purpose, objectives, and learning outcomes are clearly communicated and well-justified. The intended learning outcomes spring clearly from the mission statement of the program. The structure and content include appropriate core courses and electives. The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate and well-communicated to the students.

Quality assurance mechanisms are present and fairly well aligned with international standards. During the departmental presentation, anecdotal evidence was provided that suggests that the School's quality assurance processes have worked well so far, resulting in e.g. course changes. The committee would have appreciated if this information, including details about the courses that had been changed as well as the rationales for the changes, had been included in the evaluation documentation.

Moreover, the program of study reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe that is, preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, and the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

Our response:

No response needed.

- **Strengths for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance**
  1. **Offers rigorous academic and practical training.**
  2. **Helps established financial and banking professionals to advance in the workplace.**
  3. **Builds on and updates professional skills and knowledge.**
  4. **Offers small classes which enhance the interaction between lecturers and students.**
  5. **The fact that the founder of the University is one of the leading authorities in real estate could enhance employability of graduates.**
  6. **Program includes the discussion of case studies and game simulations**
  7. **Critical discussion in forums of content videos.**
  8. **Assessment through coursework, graded interaction through quizzes, simulation games, case studies, research paper discussions, peer reviews, and written examinations.**
  9. **Development of student research skills through an optional dissertation.**

Our response:

One Remark to the EEC: Dissertation is compulsory and not optional and corresponds to 30 ECTS.

- **Areas of improvement and recommendations for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance**

At the MSc level, students should be up to date with the latest research available. Thus the committee recommends that, in addition to the latest editions of the suggested textbooks, reading lists should include recent articles published in the top tier journals, including 'Journal of Finance', 'Journal of Financial Economics', 'Review of Financial Studies', 'Journal of Corporate Finance', 'Journal of Financial Intermediation', 'Journal of Money Credit and Banking' and 'Review of Finance'. More investment in financial databases should take place. This will help the students with their MSc dissertations and academic staff with their own research.

Our response:

Done. We fully agree with the EEC's recommendations. Also, recent research papers published in the top tier journals such as the Journal of Finance, the Journal of Financial Economics, the Review of Financial Studies, the Journal of Corporate Finance have been included to the reading lists of:

- Quantitative Methods in Finance,
- Economics for Financial Markets,
- Portfolio Management and Wealth Planning
- Market & Credit Risk Management
- Research Methods in Finance

- Corporate Finance & Financial Management (Journal of Financial Economics, Journal of Corporate Finance)
- Banking Operations and Management (Journal of Financial Economics)

Indicatively we can mention in:

*MAFN540 "Corporate Finance & Financial Management"* we have added the following research papers from the Journal of Financial Economics:

Golubova A., Lasferb M. and V. Vitkovab (2020) Active catering to dividend clientele: Evidence from takeovers, *Journal of Financial Economics*, vol. 137, Issue 3, September 2020, pp. 815-836) and from the Journal of Corporate Finance

Im H. Kang Y. and J. Shon (2020) How does uncertainty influence target capital structure? *Journal of Corporate Finance*, October, 101-42.

*MFIN560 Banking Operations and Management*, two papers were added from the Journal of Financial Economics

Gustafson M. I. Ivanov and R. Meisenzabl (2020) Bank monitoring: Evidence from syndicated loans, *Journal of Financial Economics*, August, and

Brown J. Cookson A. and R. Heimer (2019) Growing up without finance, *Journal of Financial Economics*, vol. 134, issue 3, pp. 591-616.

For ease of reference the amended syllabi are included in **Appendix 5-Syllabi**.

We have included in most syllabi, where needed, the latest editions of the textbook, but also recent articles published in top journals. For further details please see attached syllabi in **Appendix 5-Syllabi**.

**We encourage the department to invite academics from leading institutions in Europe as well as hosting visiting lecturers in addition to the Erasmus plus mobility program.**

Our response:

Done. We fully agree with the EEC's recommendation. Already, since 1<sup>st</sup> September of 2020, Senior Lecturer in Eco-Entrepreneurship Chris Moon from University of Middlesex and Paul Jones, Professor in Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and Head of Business Department, from Swansea University (UK), joined our School as Visitors Professors (please visit our website for further details).

**Comment 3: Following recent international trends, the committee encourages the introduction of a course in Business Ethics and Finance as well as a course in 'Research Methods in Finance' as a preparatory module for the dissertation.**

Our response:

Done. We fully agree with the EEC's recommendation. According to EEC's recommendation we have introduced a new elective course (MFIN690 Research Methods in Finance) at the second semester corresponding to 7.5 ECTS. In this course we have included applications on recent topics on STATA. For this end, the University has purchased two licenses of STATA in order for students to become familiar with empirical data (for more details please see **Appendix 5- Syllabi**).

**More investment in financial databases should take place. This will help the students with their MSc dissertations and academic staff with their own research.**

Our response:

Done. We fully agree with the EEC's recommendation. As mentioned previously, the library renewed the subscription to Orbis, Fame and AIMER in Public Sector. The latter, provides important information in Accounting for firms in the public sector.

## Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

**All the above processes are effectively covered by regulations and procedures in place for quality assurance as described in the BSc in Accounting, Banking and Finance Program.**

Our response:

None needed

**The teaching staff uses new technology in order to make teaching processes more effective. The program's delivery of teaching involves a combination of lectures, tutorials, seminars, examinations, in-class exercises, problem sets, games simulation (e.g. in MFIN560 and MAFN550), critical discussions on recent topics, debates, projects, presentations, assignments, computer labs, case-study applications (e.g. course MFIN 560, MFIN591) and independent study. It is designed to provide an academic experience going beyond that of the traditional classroom teaching, using different in-class activities such as panel discussions on research articles. This approach helps students to become familiar with up-to-date research in the banking and financial sector and consequently enhance their critical awareness on banking and financial economics. Teaching is through lectures, classes and laboratory sessions. In classes, students have the opportunity to ask questions, discuss problems and generally explore the subject in a less formal way. In laboratories, students work as individuals or in groups using computers.**

Our response:

None needed

Given that this is a discipline with a strong practical orientation, the course syllabi ensure the interconnectivity of both theory and practice. However this linkage could be strengthened further with the introduction of a research in finance oriented module.

Our response:

Done. We fully agree with the EEC's recommendation. According to EEC's recommendation we have introduced a new elective course (MFIN690 Research Methods in Finance) at the second semester corresponding to 7.5 ECTS. In this course we have included applications on recent topics on STATA. For this end, the University has purchased a STATA licence in order students to become familiar with empirical data (for more details please see **Appendix 5-Syllabi + Appendix 7-Proof of purchase of STATA license**).

The institution appears to have a well-organised and effective program in place for the placement of students in the practice during the course of their studies. The procedure is described in some detail in the presentation of the department and it was discussed during the interviews with the Committee.

Our response:

None needed

No, the students are not actively involved in research. The department could stimulate their role and motivation through a dissertation process.

Our response:

Dissertation is compulsory in the MSc program.

**Comment 6: The exact processes in relation to student supervision need to be described in more detail.**

Our response:

A supervisor is assigned to each student during the dissertation process. Regular supervision meetings are scheduled, whilst students are obliged in a regular basis to submit a report relative to the progress of their dissertation.

The teaching methodology used at Neapolis University Paphos is adapted to the needs of adult students as well as following internationally accepted academic standards. The members of the teaching personnel are responsible for feedback to students, not only in the form of providing feedback on various types of assessment work, but also by posting support material on the e-learning platform. The criteria for assessing student performance are clearly defined and communicated in the course syllabi. There is a blend of homework assignments and final exams in the assessment of the courses.

Our response:

None needed



How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?

This is achieved through adherence to the relevant academic regulations underpinning assessments and the quality assurance system in place capturing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting such information.

Our response:

None needed

- **Strengths for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance**

The MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance at Neapolis University compares favourably with relevant postgraduate degrees offered in Cyprus. The learning objectives of the intended program seem well-aligned with the programme aims and objectives, and are effectively communicated through the course handbooks. Also, the design of the programme as well as the learning mechanisms in place are appropriate for the effective delivery of the learning objectives.

Our response:

None needed

The Course Leaders responsible for the programme and the administration associated with the programme are experienced and committed to its delivery. There is also a team of dedicated administrators involved with the provision of various types of student support (library, accommodation, student welfare, etc).

Our response:

None needed

The internal quality assurance committee and processes seem to be effective. The quality assurance of the program of study is ensured through active participation of the academic staff that feeds information into the existing quality assurance system. The procedure of quality assurance of the program of study is well communicated in the application material.

Our response:

None needed

In contrast to what is described in internal evaluation report (e.g. see feasibility study) the program is of a small size and this results in a friendly and collegiate environment between teaching/ administrative staff and students.

Our response:

None needed

**There is evidence of a sound admissions process with well-documented criteria.**

Our response:

None needed

- **Areas of improvement and recommendations for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance**

**Caution should be given to the international character of the program. The admissions office should examine whether they could increase international (both Greek and non-Greek speaking) student intake. It is critical to brand the program efficiently in order to make it more visible amongst interested parties.**

Our response:

Done. We fully agree with the above comments and recommendations. As mentioned previously, the University has hired two ex-students from Africa to assist the marketing department with its attempts to attract students from that continent. It has also utilised the part-time services of a Chinese ex-student of the department to assist the marketing department to attract students from Asia. The marketing department is also making significant efforts to attract students from Eastern European countries, especially Russia and the Ukraine. Also, every summer the head and members of staff accompany marketing people to trips in Greece and other neighbouring countries to present the programmes of the department. Unfortunately, this summer our efforts were hampered by covid-19.

**The links to local businesses exist and they seem to enhance the employability of the students.**

Our response:

None needed

**It would advance the standing of the program and the School if the latter were to become a member of international business school accreditation schemes. This would demand the appointment of more international faculty and it is an effort that could be made in the near future.**

Our response:

We fully agree. As of the 1 September 2020 Professor Maria Psillaki has joined the department and more academics are expected to follow in the coming year. Also, from October 2020 Senior Lecturer Sofia Daskou from Nottingham Business School joined our School since the 25th of September 2020 as Associate Professor. Dr. Demetra Demetriou who holds a PhD in Finance from the Heriot-Watt University, in Edinburgh, in Scotland and qualified Chartered and Certified Accountant (ACCA) joined our department from the 21st of September 2020. Finally, as already mentioned, the School is EFMD Associate partner working towards full membership.

## 2. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

- Findings for MSc in Banking Investment and Finance

Virtually all faculty members teaching in this program have a PhD in their subject area. Most faculty members have a research record. Their work includes monographs, articles in internationally renowned academic journals, articles in contributed volumes and in academic conference proceedings, etc. The research and writing activity of the members of the faculty focus on various subjects related to the content and scope of the program. As a result, this contributes to their teaching activity.

Our response:

None needed

Special seminars are organised by the University for training in teaching methods, adult education and new technologies with the most recent of those held in October 2018 at the premises of the University and in collaboration with the Hellenic Open University. It would have been desirable to provide the related documentation to the EEC.

Our response:

Please see *Appendix 8-Training Seminars* for further details.

Teaching performance is assessed via student feedback questionnaires for each course. The link between teaching performance and related remuneration and promotions of academic staff is not clear however.

Our response:

Remuneration is mainly based on standard scales, depending on rank. The assessment of academics is made up of several constituent parts including teaching performance, research activity, administrative contribution and qualifications. The remuneration of academics is therefore based on a several parameters.

In the case of the MSc programme it appears to be so, since relevant research articles are included in the reading lists of the courses and used as a basis for the class coursework.

Our response:

None needed

Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad? There seem to be regular instances of communication and visits between Neapolis faculty and other Erasmus plus partner institutions. We recommend an expansion of similar collaborations and visits with other HEIs both domestically and abroad.

Our response:

International linkages and collaborations are constantly increasing (Piraeus University, European Mediterranean University, etc.).

Even though it is pointed out in the internal evaluation report that “The number of courses taught by the faculty members is adapted to international academic standards and follows the guidelines of the CYQAA so that the quality of the studies is guaranteed and the teachers have sufficient time to conduct research...”, our impression is that the teaching load is relatively heavy. It is not clear what the promotion criteria are and how these link to teaching and research output. Some of the issues above have not been discussed adequately in the documentation provided.

Our response:

See attached related policy in *Appendix 1-Research Incentives*.

Both from our review of the internal evaluation report of the program and from our discussions with faculty such evaluations do take place and are taken into account in the quality assurance processes of the University. The committee asked for more evidence how student feedback further informs program development. The committee would also recommend an exit questionnaire for graduates on their entire program experience.

Our response:

Done. We passed the recommendation to the Quality Assurance Department of the University. A related exit questionnaire is to be developed and applied.

- **Strengths for MSc in Banking Investment and Finance**

Neapolis University Pafos is a relatively new University (it was founded as recently as 2010), but with good facilities. Despite its young age, the Department of Accounting & Finance is well staffed and there is some research culture as evidenced by research seminar series and publications in international journals by the academic staff.

We found it very promising that there is a mix of senior and junior faculty in the programme with diffusion of experience from the more senior faculty to the more junior academics. In addition, junior faculty who are at an early stage of their careers have international qualifications and are motivated to increase the quality of their teaching and research. Faculty seemed to be well integrated and in good working terms.

Our response:

None needed

The modern premises and facilities of the University enhance both the teaching and learning environment on campus. The committee felt that more investment was needed in financial databases however since the availability of such databases would help both students and academic staff. First, students would be able to accustom themselves with the main financial databases. Although, this would be particularly beneficial for the postgraduate students undertaking a dissertation, the ability to use such databases may also enhance the employability of undergraduates. Second, access to these databases would also help the academic staff with their research.

Our response:

Done. As mentioned before, the library renewed the subscription to Orbis, Fame and AIMER in Public Sector. The latter, provides important information in Accounting for firms in the public sector.

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 through the existing Quality Assurance Framework in place. Adherence to Neapolis University policies and regulations is a strong point of the internal control procedures. University scholarships provide a strong incentive for the recruitment of high-quality students and we would encourage the MSc program to carry on offering bursaries in the future.

Our response:

None needed

- **Areas of improvement and recommendations for MSc in Banking Investment and Finance**

The committee would have welcomed more information on how research performance is assessed for the academic staff. More generally, while there is evidence of research activity, such as research output, more needs to be done in terms of improving the quality and quantity of the publication output. The definition of what counts as good research could be improved, i.e. Neapolis University could formally incorporate a certain level of research quality indicators (based on e.g. the ABS journal quality lists, e.g. publications in ABS 3, ABS 4 and ABS 4\* journals) and peer-reviewed work so that online publications and conference submissions (which sometimes may not be peer reviewed) are discussed with respective communities. In sum, a reflection and discussion about what the University considers to be good research would be beneficial. No discussions were held with the rector regarding research incentives provided at Neapolis University and related compensation. Even though in the course of the discussions with Neapolis faculty it was pointed out that funds for research activities are available the University could promote better the existence of such funding via internal communications.

Our response:

The Senate has adopted incentives for faculty members in order to increase their published work. More precisely, faculty members who publish more than 3 articles in international journals or conferences that are included in Scopus database (at least 1 article needs to be published as a journal) receive a reduction of up to 3 hours from their weekly teaching obligations.

Faculty members who publish more than 5 articles in international journals or conferences that are included in Scopus database (two articles need to be published as journals) can use private/individual offices.

The Faculty member with the most journal publications, that are included in Scopus database, will receive a 2000 Euros bonus at the end of each academic year. Evaluation will be done according to the Scopus international database or the ABS list, and more specifically using the SNIP index of each journal (for further details please see **Appendix 1-Research Incentives**).

**Comment 2:** In addition, even though the existence of research seminars was pointed out to the committee during the interviews there was no detailed evidence in the internal evaluation report of local research seminars during which faculty could present their work to colleagues in order to obtain feedback,

a practice that may improve the quality of the research and research related teaching in the institution. The COVID-19 global situation could foster the introduction of virtual research seminars inviting renowned speakers from abroad to present their work at little or no cost to the department.

Our response:

We fully agree. Done. We have an agenda where we have established two types of research seminars. The internal research seminars where the faculty staff present their research to colleagues for possible synergies and feedback in order to improve their quality of research and their related research teaching (see below the invitation e-mailed to all academic staff).

From: Business School  
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2020 8:14 AM  
To: business\_staff <business\_staff@nup.ac.cy>; informatics\_staff <informatics\_staff@nup.ac.cy>  
Cc: Psillaki Maria <m.psillaki@nup.ac.cy>  
Subject: NUP Seminars – Internals - Synergies  
Importance: High

Καλημέρα και καλή εβδομάδα σε όλους,

Σήμερα ξεκινάμε τα πρώτα σεμινάρια παρουσίασης της έρευνας των μελών ΔΕΠ στις 11.00 με τον κ. Χατζηχριστοφή, στις 11.30 με τον κ. Χριστοδούλο και στις 12.00 με το κ. Αποστολόπουλο.

NUP Seminars – Internals - Synergies	
Presenter	Time
Savvas Chatzichristofis	11:00
Panayiotis Christodoulou	11:30
Nikos Apostolopoulos	12:00

Η παρουσία όλων των Μελών ΔΕΠ της Σχολής είναι σημαντική.

Kind Regards  
**Georgia Savva**  
Programme Administrator  
School of Economics, Administration & Computer Science

Also, we have established research seminars from the academia or from the industry with discussants who are leaders in their field. More precisely, the 17 of September 2020, Professor Giovanni Barone-Adesi from University of Lugano gave a research seminar on estimation of pricing Kernel (see below and for more detail these two types of research seminars please see **Appendix 2-Research Seminars**, table A and table B).

The screenshot shows the website of Neapolis University Paphos. The main content area features an event titled "Διαδίκτυακό ερευνητικό σεμινάριο με θέμα 'Estimating the pricing Kernel'" which has passed. Below the event title is a promotional flyer for the seminar, organized by Neapolis University Paphos, featuring a speaker from the University of Lugano. To the right, there is a sidebar with a section titled "Εκδήλωση" (Event) listing other seminars, including one on "Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση" and another on "3ο διαδικτυακό σεμινάριο Ιστορίας: Κωνσταντινούπολη - Αγία Σοφία". At the bottom of the sidebar, there is a button that says "Ενδιαφέρεσαι να μιλήσουμε;" (Are you interested in talking to us?).

### 3. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

- Findings for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance

The committee feels that admission requirements for the study program are appropriate. There is a detailed process for the accreditation of prior learning.

Our response:

None needed

There is a detailed process for the recognition of prior learning in the internal evaluation report.

Our response:

None needed

- Strengths for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance

In addition to the points above the University of Neapolis is based in the City of Paphos. This is the only University located in this broad geographic area. This means that it could work excellently as a community center for the area and contribute towards educating the local population.

Our response:

Done. None needed.

The institution can function as a gateway of business knowledge as various business people and entrepreneurs could be invited to the University from abroad and share their knowledge with the MSc students.

Our response:

Done. As mentioned above, for details see *Appendix 2-Research seminars*.

- **Areas of improvement and recommendations for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance**

**We recommend that University administration services try to further build the university network and market aggressively the MSc programme in premium markets.**

Our response:

Done. We fully agree. The University has hired two ex-students from Africa to assist the marketing department with its attempts to attract students from that continent. It has also utilised the part-time services of a Chinese ex-student of the department to assist the marketing department to attract students from Asia. The marketing department is also making significant efforts to attract students from Eastern European countries, especially Russia and the Ukraine. The marketing department works on that direction but unfortunately, this summer our efforts were hampered by covid-1

**The committee has the impression that several Bachelor students could continue in the University of Neapolis with postgraduate studies. Thus, we urge the department to make certain that there are no overlaps between the curricula of the MSc and BSc programs.**

Our response:

We ensure the EEC that there is no overlapping between the curricula of the MSc and BSc programs. The level of the MSc program is different and more advanced, and the learning objectives are different: at the MSc level, we emphasize at students' development of critical thinking and prepare them to encounter the recent challenges of financial institutions and banks.

**There was no mentioning of the competition from similar MSc programs domestically and internationally. Based on the committee's experience, almost every single university in Cyprus is offering Masters in the broad area of Accounting and Finance.**

Our response:

In our knowledge is the only postgraduate program combining three different topics: banking, finance and investment offering a large spectrum of compulsory (e.g. corporate finance) and electives (e.g. Real Estate Finance and Investment) courses covering most of the area of the broad spectrum of finance. Only two universities in Cyprus offer an MSc program in Banking and Finance, the Open University of Cyprus, and the European University of Cyprus but both of these programs are not conventional.



#### 4. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

- Findings for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance

Through our virtual visit of the Neapolis University premises, the committee was able to inspect the general facilities of the University, lobby, auditoriums, classrooms, computer labs, common areas, and the Library. The committee's impression was that all premises and resources are modern, fully functional and well designed. They are managed by engaged administrative staff that know a great deal about what happens at the institution. All staff have very good English.

Our response:

None needed

No major issues were raised in our discussion with teaching staff. The Library of Neapolis University appears to have a good collection of printed and electronic books as well as access to a variety of international scientific journals and databases covering the needs of students of the Program. The committee recommends investment in financial databases (e.g. WRDS) as a means for enhancing the research experience for students and faculty.

Our response:

Recommendation is duly noted.

All premises are new and modern and given the student market Neapolis University is aiming at no such risks are deemed as pressing in the foreseeable future.

Our response:

None needed

No issues were raised from the student representatives.

Our response:

None needed

Neapolis University offers full student welfare services.

Our response:

None needed

There does not seem to be a policy in place for a preparatory year for those students with curriculum deficiencies in place.

Our response:

Students' background is carefully assessed as part of the admissions criteria. Nevertheless, if required, extra support tutorials are taking place for students in need.

**Through the virtual visit it was not possible to assess the special needs actions for people with physical disabilities.**

Our response:

Access to classes is ensured through tailor made infrastructure. See photos and related procedure attached in ***Appendix 9-Provisions for people with disabilities***.

- **Strengths for MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance**

**It seems that overall the MSc in Banking, Investment and Finance at Neapolis University is a well-resourced program with modern facilities offered to both academic staff and students.**

**Able administrative staff exist to help with the operationalisation of the program and contribute positively to the student experience.**

Our response:

None needed



#### 4. Additional for distance learning programmes

*(ALL ESG)*

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## 5. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Click or tap here to enter text.



## 6. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

Click or tap here to enter text.

## B. Conclusions and final remarks

**Overall this is a well-designed program with the potential to become one of the more successful MSc's in the University. A few points to consider are as follows:**

We thank the EEC for the positive conclusions and the constructive remarks and recommendations for improvement which have been incorporated accordingly.

**Students have an option to do a dissertation or instead take two additional courses. In addition, those students who decide to go down the dissertation route can choose to work on their dissertation during the taught part of the program or can spend a third semester working on their dissertation. As the two-semester dissertation route is currently on offer for the first time, the committee advise the School and department to monitor student progression on this route.**

### Our response:

First to clarify the following point: the dissertation is compulsory, and students do not have the option to take two additional courses instead of the dissertation. Furthermore, according to the Masters' internal regulation students have the obligation to present the progress of their dissertation on a research seminar and get feedback and constructive comments on their work from the faculty.

**Comment 2: It was not clear from the documentation why the assessment across courses is highly standardised. Indeed, every course has the same three types of assessment (a written assignment and/or mid-term exam), graded interaction and a final exam with the same weights attached to each. What would be the rationale behind such standardisation? Compare this to the BSc in Banking, Accounting and Finance where there is no such standardisation. Concerning the standardisation of the assessment on the courses, Accounting and Financial Statement Analysis was an exception to the rule as this course employed different weights. However, the rationale for this was not clear.**

### Our response:

Homogeneity between all courses is behind the rationale of standardization.

**In terms of the program structure, it seems odd that the MSc does not have a course on research skills.**

### Our response:

Done. We fully agree. As mentioned previously we have included a new course MFIN690 "Research methods in Finance" where students will improve their research skills and can develop higher order thinking skills, such as creativity and research (attached in **Appendix 5-Syllabi**).

**Quantitative Methods in Finance seems to double up as such a course. Nevertheless, the committee suggests that the department reviews this course. While the course content section suggests that the course (see in particular week 13) covers issues about how to conduct empirical research, there is no such explicit mention in the course purpose and objectives section. The rationale behind some of the suggested additional reading (e.g. a paper on epidemiology and the ARIMA model) was not clear. There should be**

**sufficient papers in finance that choose the same methodologies. In addition, this course puts a lot of emphasis on time-series econometrics while panel data econometrics is given less space.**

Our response:

We fully agree, and we thank the EEC for this constructive comment. Done. We have amended MFIN500 Quantitative Methods in Finance accordingly. More precisely, we have amended the syllabus in order to include three weeks in panel data econometrics. Also, we have removed the ARIMA model from the contents and we have added more recent editions of the textbooks and recent research papers from top journals. Finally, we have removed from week 13 the topic on how to conduct empirical research as now we have added a new elective course on Research Methods in Finance.

Below, we summarize the actions taken in order to meet suggestions and recommendations of the committee:

1. A new elective course “Research Methods in Finance” has been added.
2. More recent editions of the textbooks have been added to the Quantitative Methods in Finance course
3. More recent research papers have been added according to the different methods analysed in the course:
  - Catania L., Grassi F. and Francesco Ravazzolo (2019), “Forecasting cryptocurrencies under model and parameter instability”, *International Journal of Forecasting*, 35, 2, 485-501.
  - Dantas A. Oliveira F. (2018), “Improving time series forecasting: An approach combining bootstrap aggregation, clusters and exponential smoothing”, *International Journal of Forecasting*, 34, 4, 748-761.
  - Ericsson N (2017), “Economic forecasting in theory and practice: An interview with David F. Hendry”, *International Journal of Forecasting*, 33, 2, 523-542.
  - Hong T, Pinsonb P. Fan S., Zareipour H., Troccoli A. and J. Hyndmanc (2016), “Probabilistic energy forecasting: Global Energy Forecasting Competition 2014 and beyond”, *International Journal of Forecasting*, 32, 3, 896-913.
  - Pathan, S., & Faff, R., 2013. Does board structure in banks really affect their performance?, *Journal of Banking and Finance*, 37(5), 1573-1589
4. Three weeks of lectures have been added on panel data econometrics.

**A large number of courses did not use the most recent version of the required textbooks. On some courses, the version of the textbook on the reading list dated back to e.g. the mid-2000s while the most recent version available was dated e.g. 2017 or 2018. For a number of courses, the rationale for the journals recommended to the students was also not clear. Indeed, some of the recommended journals were not part of the mainstream journals in the course’s subject area. One journal (“Journal of Corporate Finance and Organization”) seemed to be listed with the wrong name. In at least one instance, a textbook recommended as additional reading no longer seemed to be in print.**

Our response:

Done. We fully agree. More recent versions of the required textbooks have been added in different courses. More precisely in the following courses the syllabi were amended accordingly in order to include the most recent version of the textbooks and research papers from top journals such as the Journal of Finance, the Journal of Financial Economics, the Review of Financial Studies, the Journal of Corporate Finance:

- Quantitative Methods in Finance,
- Economics for Financial Markets,
- Portfolio Management and Wealth Planning
- Market & Credit Risk Management
- Research Methods in Finance
- Corporate Finance & Financial Management
- Banking Operations and Management

For more details, please see **Appendix 5-Syllabi**

Below, we summarize the actions taken in order to meet suggestions and recommendations of the committee:

1. A new elective course “Research Methods in Finance” has been added.
2. We have included in the Syllabi where needed more recent editions of the required textbooks
3. We have included in the Syllabi research papers from top tier Journals
4. We have amended the Syllabus of Quantitative methods in Finance accordingly to the EEC’s comment.
5. New or updated documents have been included in Appendix section:
  - a) Research Incentives
  - b) Research seminars
  - c) Syllabi

The necessary supporting documentation is attached in the Appendix section.

Appendix:

**Appendix 1 – Research Incentives**

**Appendix 2 – Research Seminars**

**Appendix 5 – (Updated/New) Syllabi**





### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Prof. Sklias Pantelis</b>	Rector	
<b>Prof. Psillaki Maria</b>	Dean	
<b>Assoc. Prof. Hadjixenophontos Andreas</b>	Head of Department	

**Date:** 16/10/2020

