



ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
THE CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



4/13/2019

Doc. 300.1.1

Neapolis University Pafos

MSc International Relations, Strategy and
Security Distance learning

External evaluation report

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 and 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015 and N. 47(I)/2016].

A. Introduction

The evaluation visit took place on Thursday 11 April 2019. The evaluation committee had a fruitful discussion with a representation of academic and professional service staff. The visit commenced with an overview presentation regarding the development, ethos, values and future direction of the University. It was evident that Neapolis University Pafos is an ambitious institution and the committee were impressed by the plans for the further development of the University, including the building of a new campus and the broader expansion plans in terms of the degree programmes under development. The University is clearly committed to supporting the student learning experience and has a very positive staff student ratio of 1: 12.

During the visit we had presentations that covered the degree programme, the learning environment including the learner management systems, the use of Moodle, quality assurance, the library provision, as well as financial viability. While the latter was informative in terms of highlighting the positive contribution that the intended distance learning programme was to make to the overall financial baseline of the University, the committee’s remit and focus was primarily concerned with the overall learning environment as opposed to the financial viability.

In terms of the structure of the day, the committee made some adjustments to the organization and running of the day so as to provide a greater opportunity for questions and answers as opposed to just receiving presentations, of which a good deal of the material had already been received in advance. The committee particularly welcomed the opportunity to meet separately with the teaching staff and to listen to students.

External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Prof Alasdair Blair	Chair	De Montfort University
Prof Knud Erik Jørgensen	Committee member	Aarhus University
Dr Olga Demetriou	Committee member	Durham University
Prof Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos	Committee member	Uppsala University
Mr Zenonas Hadjicostas	Committee member – student representative	University of Cyprus

B. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

1. Study program and study program's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the program of study:*
 - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
 - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
 - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
 - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
 - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
 - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

- *The program of study:*
 - *is designed with overall program objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
 - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
 - *benefits from external expertise*
 - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
 - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
 - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
 - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
 - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
 - *results to a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
 - *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the program is up to date*
 - *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, the student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the program*
 - *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

- *Public information (clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible):*
 - *about the program of study offered*

- *the selection criteria*
- *the intended learning outcomes*
- *the qualification awarded*
- *the teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
- *the pass rates*
- *the learning opportunities available to the students*
- *graduate employment information*

Findings

- The study programme is designed and is intended to be launched after the process of accreditation has come to a successful conclusion. Hence, the self-evaluation report, application and findings during the onsite visit do not concern experiences with an existing programme.
- The programme runs over 1.5 years. The structure of the programme includes eight courses (each 7.5 ECTS) plus one dissertation (30 ECTS).
- All courses are compulsory.
- The course on research methodology is meant to prepare students for the dissertation as opposed to an introduction to research methodologies and philosophies.
- The preparation for the thesis does not contain any taught content. Students are appointed a supervisor who is available for consultation throughout the process of preparing the thesis (no specific number of supervision sessions were noted in the documentation). Before submission, the supervisor and student need to reach a consensus about the viability of the thesis.
- The application provides limited information about the dissertation. The onsite visit did, however, provide some additional information relating to the dissertation arrangements and the process of its evaluation.
- The only form of teaching mentioned in the application is 'lectures'. The onsite visit helped clarify the situation so that teachers actually intend to employ a variety of teaching forms, including student presentations and article reviews.

Strengths

- The 1.5 years programme conforms with national standards in Cyprus. However, the programme is out of sync with Bologna process standards, and notably both the UK approach of a 1-year taught Masters and the US/European approach of a 2-year taught Masters.
- The ECTS credit framework is aligned to the national standards in Cyprus, but is similarly out of sync with Bologna standards.
- The programme has a strong focus on international relations and security. In the market of Master degree programmes prospective students can easily detect the programme's distinctive offering. There is, however, scope for additional clarification as to the distinctive 'MSc' element of this programme as opposed to another taught MA degree.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- As all courses are compulsory, it is apparent that students are only able to specialise in their dissertation. While the committee appreciates that the structured compulsory element

of the programme provides a framework that may be of use for resourcing, we nonetheless considered that students could benefit from the provision of elective courses that would provide an opportunity for greater specialisation.

- Dissertations are supposed to be 12.000-15.000 words long. Given the 30 ECTS credits allocated to the dissertation, it could be argued that that the dissertation word count does not reflect the overall weighting of the dissertation within the degree programme. The committee considered that it would be helpful to have explicit criteria about the quality of writing expected in the dissertation and the comparative standing of the dissertation vis-à-vis other assessment components, especially those requiring extended pieces of writing that might progressively lead to the word-length and writing quality expected of the dissertation.
- The committee considered that further consideration should be given to the structure of the degree programme with greater attention attached to providing students with some of the core understandings of International Relations in the first semester. For example, the committee thought that Contemporary Issues in Global Politics might be better placed in Semester one and Information Security better placed in Semester two. The committee also thought that the taught content of Information Security needed a stronger resonance with the objectives of the degree programme.
- There was insufficient information on the assessment components of the eight taught courses and their linkage to the overall programme objectives and the dissertation. The committee felt that the degree programme would benefit from greater clarity in this area, which may in turn have a positive impact on framing the bespoke nature of the degree programme to applicants. This could include providing a clearer linkage between the taught and assessment components in relation to the relevant skills that they provide for future employability.
- The committee considered that the language of the programme content did not reflect the standards that are to be expected at Masters level. For example, more emphasis needs to be attached to the learning outcomes of the programme and the courses with regard to critical reflection, independent analysis etc. Consequently, further consideration should be given to clarifying the expected advanced level of learning at Masters level.
- Although the programme has a focus on security studies, the course content does not reflect a holistic view of security. This includes the provision of courses on human security, peace building, sustainable development goals, and gender and security. While we appreciate that there are inevitable resource constraints in terms of the capacity to deliver the programme, there was no sense of a vision and future direction of the programme to take into consideration this wider content, or the extent to which such content could be taught within the established course offering, besides occasional references within existing course outlines.
- The methodology course was primarily focused on research design as opposed to the techniques applied to research methods. The committee considered that some consideration could be given to practical research methods and the way that students can be equipped with the necessary research skills for their dissertation, including skills which allow students to collect primary data.
- No consideration was given to the ethical aspect of research. The committee considered that ethical considerations are an important aspect of a degree programme that focuses on IR and security studies.
- It was evident from the study guide of the course on strategy and decision-making that it is in reality a business studies course and not a security studies course. As such, the course did not reflect the remit of the degree programme and was out of sync with the learning outcomes and the expected content that the programme seeks to deliver. The committee

therefore considered that further consideration needs to be given to the course content and its application to the degree programme.

Note what is applicable for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3 or 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
1.1	Quality assurance policy defines competences and procedures for the people involved.	8
1.2	Participation in quality assurance processes is ensured for:	
	1.2.1 the members of the teaching staff	7
	1.2.2 the members of the administrative staff	8
	1.2.3 the students	7
1.3	The guide and / or the regulations for quality assurance, provide detailed information and data for the support and management of the program of study.	6
1.4	The quality assurance process constitutes an academic process and it is not restricted by non-academic factors.	8
1.5	The organization of the educational process safeguards the quality implementation of the program's purpose, objectives and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Particularly, the following are taken into consideration:	
	1.5.1 The implementation of a specific academic calendar and its timely publication	N/A
	1.5.2 The disclosure of the program's curricula to the students, and their implementation by the teaching staff	N/A
	1.5.3 The course web-pages, updated with the relevant supplementary material	N/A
	1.5.4 The procedures for the fulfillment of undergraduate and postgraduate assignments / practical training	8
	1.5.5 The procedures for the conduct and the format of the examinations and for student assessment	N/A

	1.5.6	The effective provision of information to the students and the enhancement of their participation in the procedures for the improvement of the educational process	8
1.6		The purpose and objectives of the program of study are formulated in terms of expected learning outcomes and are consistent with the mission and the strategy of the institution.	7
1.7		The purpose and objectives of the program and the learning outcomes are utilized as a guide for the design of the program of study.	7
1.8		The following ensure the achievement of the program's purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes:	
	1.8.1	The number of courses	8
	1.8.2	The program's content	7
	1.8.3	The methods of assessment	7
	1.8.4	The teaching material	7
	1.8.5	The equipment	7
1.9		The expected learning outcomes of the program are known to the students and to the members of the teaching staff.	8
1.10		The learning process is properly designed to achieve the expected learning outcomes.	8
1.11		It is ensured that learning outcomes may be achieved within the specified timeframe.	8
1.12		The program, in addition to the courses focusing on the specific discipline, includes an adequate number of general education courses according to the European practice.	8
1.13		The content of the program's courses reflects the latest achievements / developments in science, arts, research and technology.	8
1.14		New research results are embodied in the content of the program of study.	8
1.15		The content of foundation courses is designed to prepare the students for the first year of their chosen undergraduate degree.	N/A
1.16		The program of study is structured in a consistent manner and in sequence, so that concepts operating as preconditions precede the teaching of other, more complex and cognitively more demanding, concepts.	7
1.17		The learning outcomes and the content of the program are consistent.	8
1.18		The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied and there is	8

	correspondence between credits, workload and expected learning outcomes per course and per semester for the student either he / she studies in a specific program or he/she is registered and studies simultaneously in additional programs of studies according to the European practice in higher education institutions.	
1.19	The higher education qualification awarded to the students, corresponds to the purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes of the program.	8
1.20	The higher education qualification and the program of study, conform to the provisions of their corresponding professional and vocational bodies for the purpose of registration to these bodies.	N/A
1.21	Program's management with regard to its design, its approval, its monitoring and its review, is in place.	8
1.22	It is ensured that the program's management and development process is an academic process which operates without any non-academic interventions.	8
1.23	The program's collaborations with other institutions are compared positively with corresponding collaborations of other departments / programs of study in Europe and internationally.	N/A
1.24	Procedures are applied so that the program conforms to the scientific and professional activities of the graduates.	8
1.25	Indicators for the employability of graduates and the employability record of the department's graduates are described in the feasibility study.	N/A
1.26	The graduation rate for the program of study is analogous to other programs with similar content.	N/A
1.27	The program of study benefits the society.	8
1.28	Information relating to the program of study are posted publicly and include:	
1.28.1	The provisions regarding unit credits	N/A
1.28.2	The expected learning outcomes	N/A
1.28.3	The methodology	N/A
1.28.4	Course descriptions	N/A
1.28.5	The program's structure	N/A
1.28.6	The admission requirements	N/A
1.28.7	The format and the procedures for student assessment	N/A
1.28.8	The pass rates	N/A

In the following section clarification is provided on the numeric scoring provided above.

- 1.1-1.2 The quality assurance (QA) presentation indicates that students and staff are involved in QA activities. The presentation did, however, tend to refer to further procedures and policies such as disabilities and complaints handling as opposed to the committee having access to a full and detailed set of information. As such, it was not possible to have full confidence in all of the QA procedures.
- 1.3 The QA and standards document that was presented for the distance learning programmes in Annex 5 provided rather vague and generalised comments in relation to the QA procedures, with there being no sense that the annotated comments from the programme team had been tailored to the distance learning programme. This state of affairs was further highlighted by the fact that the annotated comments in Appendix 5 were basically the same for the MSc campus based and the BSc degree programmes. With regard to student representation, there appeared to be little consideration as to the implication of how student representation would work in the context of distance learning delivery, whereas there was a sense as to how student representation on courses and programmes worked on campus-based programmes.
- 1.4 It was apparent from the information presented and the supporting documentation that QA procedures are driven by academic considerations. However, more information would have been helpful to clarify the exact nature of some of the committees and structures that were referred to in the documentation and also the presentation, e.g. the pedagogic committee (terms of reference, membership, meeting times etc.). The committee did not have access to existing committee minutes, meetings, schedules which would have confirmed the operational aspects of such procedures.
- 1.5 The committee were not presented with specific information in relation to the academic calendar, the disclosure of information to students and web pages and is therefore unable to comment. The committee was of the opinion that students would be provided with training to complete assignments and examinations. However, there was a lack of detail in terms of the pedagogic underpinnings of these procedures. No information was provided regarding information for examinations. While information was provided with regard to the ability for students to provide feedback on their class experience, there was a lack of detail as to how this information would be analysed, reviewed and then acted upon to close the feedback loop to students.
- 1.6 The committee felt that the learning outcomes of the programme needed to be adjusted to reflect the advanced nature of study at Masters level. The committee also considered that there could be a stronger linkage between the learning outcomes, the programme of study and the more applied and employability-focused nature of the University.
- 1.7 The committee felt that for the most part the purpose and design of the programme was satisfactory. However, some elements of the courses could have had a stronger linkage to the programme's objectives, including for example courses on Strategy and Decision Making.
- 1.8 As the programme has a fixed structure, the committee felt that there was room for

additional courses to provide greater student choice and specialization. There was an absence of information relating to the exact assessment diet of the programme of study, e.g. the composition of the 30% component, and the timeframe of the final exam.

- 1.9 While the expected learning outcomes are clear, we felt that the programme would benefit from a stronger alignment between the programme learning outcomes and the course learning outcomes.
- 1.10 In broad terms the learning outcomes are met through the learning process. Some of the courses could be more tightly focused towards the overall programme.
- 1.11 There is evidence that learning outcomes are met.
- 1.12-1.14 The programme makes use of up-to-date materials.
- 1.16 The committee thought that there might be room for changes to the structure of the programme to provide students with some more introductory courses to international relations in the first semester. As noted, the committee considered that some courses were less aligned to the objectives of the programme.
- 1.17-1.19 The credit system was appropriate and in conjunction with national standards. There is scope to consider the extent to which all the learning outcomes of the programme reflect the programme alignment and course content.
- 1.21-1.22 It would have been helpful to have had additional information relating to the operation of programme management, such as programme leader and the extent to which academics are provided with training and development as they progress into programme management duties.
- 1.24 There is scope for greater clarity in terms of the way that the programme supports employability and relates to future career opportunities.
- 1.27 It is apparent that the programme would be of benefit in terms of providing a stronger level of knowledge and issues relating to contemporary global events and debates.

2 Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3)

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development and respects their needs.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*

- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*

Findings

- Neapolis University of Pafos is a relatively new University that has undertaken a rapid process of expansion in terms of its portfolio of programmes. The University has experience of delivering teaching at distance learning level and presently has in the region of 650 students studying on distance learning programmes.
- We were provided with a range of information relating to the structure of the proposed MSc distance learning programme in International Relations, Strategy and Security which included the study guides for all of the courses with the exception of the Dissertation. The degree programme follows a structured pathway where all students take the same courses and as such there is no optionality.
- The distance learning programme is structured in a way which makes use of educational technology to support the delivery and which enables students to interact via the Wiziq platform where 6 tele-meetings are scheduled for each course. Although this is in keeping with distance learning programmes in other Universities, there was an absence of information in the written documentation relating to the teaching methodology and approach in terms of the timing and organisation of these tele-meetings. While this became clearer in the discussion with the teaching team, such as the provision of orientation tele-meetings, a more structured methodological approach for supporting distance learning provision would have been helpful.
- The orientation sessions are not identified in the study timetable and the study timetable is not supported with information on when the tele-meetings were to take place. It was not clear if the students have additional campus-based study sessions and also pastoral support sessions when they attend for the campus-based final assessment.
- The degree programme follows a similar path in terms of student learning and assessment, with the assessment diet being split between a 30% midterm and a 70% final exam on all courses with the exception of the dissertation.
- Academics have discretion for deciding on the exact nature of the 30% assessment component, with the pedagogic committee having responsibility for ensuring that there was no assessment duplication within the course. However, there was a lack of clarity and guidance as to the way in which the committee operated and the principles surrounding the nature of assessment and how duplication of the same assessment would be avoided. While this appears to be keeping with the custom and

practice of the Cypriot educational system, it does mean that there is an absence of information with regard to how the nature of the assessment of the degree maps against the learning outcomes. In addition, there is a lack of clarity with regard to how the assessment on the courses prepare students for the dissertation both in terms of the preparedness to undertake an extended piece of writing as well as the capacity to undertake more advanced levels of research in keeping with a Masters level of study.

- The process of marking is predominantly undertaken by one member of staff, with there not being an established practice of internal moderation of work and also the sharing of marking practices among staff members. Student marks are reviewed in advance of, and at, the assessment board and where marking distributions are out of line with the student profiles further investigation is undertaken. In addition, students have the right of appeal on individual marks at which point the work is reviewed by an additional staff member. While this process is in keeping with the Cypriot higher education system, consideration might be given to stronger processes to enable the sharing of good practice among the teaching staff given the developing nature of the provision and the policy of recruiting additional occasional staff to support the teaching provision.
- As far as student contribution and involvement in the research process is concerned, while the students benefit from a dedicated methodology course, the course is itself focused more on research writing techniques as opposed to the methodologies employed in undertaking research.
- The students have a scheduled weekly set of study classes that provide direction and focus to their studies. The absence of information relating to the dissertation course means that it is not possible to comment on how the courses prepare students for the dissertation and how this links to research processes.

Strengths

- The distance learning programme is supported by an established provision within the university for the running and organisation of distance learning programmes.
- The University makes good use of the Moodle platform, the Wiziq e-learning platform and provides students with additional support in the form of help manuals.
- The University has contracted out-of-hours support to ensure that students are able to access help outside of normal study hours.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Further consideration could be given to how the process of student assessment provides sufficient variety to test students at Masters level and also to prepare them to undertake an extended piece of writing.
- It is not clear how formative assessment is built into the degree programme.
- No information was provided in the study guide with regard to the expected timings for the 6 tele-meetings that were to be organised for each course per semester.
- Further consideration should be given to how assessments are coordinated across the academic provision, particularly with regard to the 30% component that is determined by individual members of staff teaching the course.
- Further consideration should be given to the internal marking policy to ensure the dissemination of good practice regarding oversight.

- Further consideration should be given to developing the research level component of the programme of study through the critical engagement with or exposure to primary materials in the taught courses and/or case studies.

Note what is applicable for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3 or 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
2.1	The number of students in each class allows for constructive teaching and communication.	8
2.2	The number of students in each class compares positively to the current international standards and/or practices.	8
2.3	A policy for regular and effective communication, between the teaching staff and the students, is applied.	7
2.4	The methodology utilized in each course leads to the achievement of the course's purpose and objectives and those of the individual modules.	6
2.5	Formative assessment and feedback are provided to the students regularly.	5
2.6	The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance, are clear, adequate, and known to the students.	6
2.7	Educational activities which encourage students' active participation in the learning process, are implemented.	6
2.8	Teaching incorporates the use of modern educational technologies that are consistent with international standards, including a platform for the electronic support of learning.	7
2.9	Teaching materials (books, manuals, journals, databases, and teaching notes) meet the requirements set by the methodology of the program's individual courses, and are updated regularly.	7
2.10	It is ensured that teaching and learning have been enlightened by research.	8
2.11	Students, teaching and administrative staff participate in research activities and projects.	6
2.12	Students are trained in the research process.	6

In the following section clarification is provided on the numeric scoring provided above.

- 2.1-2.2 The committee was impressed by the proposed number of students in the distance learning classes. However, the committee was not able to fully comment on the operation of distance learning classes as it did not have information relating to the operation of existing distance learning programmes by the University, such as reviews and student evaluation.
- 2.3 The committee considered that students would be able to engage well with academic staff. However, there was no evidence of how existing distance learning practice operates within the University in terms of staff-student engagement in terms of feedback by students.
- 2.4 More information could have been provided with regard to the overall methodology and approach of the courses. Given the absence of information relating to assessment patterns and components it is hard to provide a full judgment in terms of the methodological approach of the courses.
- 2.5 Insufficient information was provided in relation to how formative assessment operates. There was a general absence of information in relation to the operation of formative and summative assessment.
- 2.6 The only information on assessment is the 30% / 70% assessment component weightings. More information is required to provide a full appraisal of the assessment diet. No information was provided on the dissertation component of the degree programme.
- 2.7 While the design of the programme does enable student interaction in an online class setting, it was not clear how broader educational activities would be available to distance learning students.
- 2.8 The committee considered that the courses engaged with appropriate up-to-date approaches. However, more information might have been given with regard to the integration of the likes of podcasts and other online materials to support the student learning experience.
- 2.9 The teaching materials could have shown evidence of greater engagement with primary materials to support the more advanced level of study that is relevant at Masters level.
- 2.10 The materials showed an awareness of up-to-date research publications.
- 2.11 It was unclear how distance learning students would engage in a research environment that is typical of masters level.
- 2.12 The methodology module was more focused in how to complete a dissertation as opposed to undertaking research and the methodologies and philosophies underpinning such approaches. The study packs for the courses demonstrate that students are to engage with up-to-date research materials. However, there is an absence of information relating to the methodological processes relating to the undertaking of research and a lack of detail with regard to students engaging with primary materials.

3 Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Standards

- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study program, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participate in teaching the study program.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Assessment of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*

Findings

- The staff that the team met reported that they are aware of procedures relating to career development and staff evaluation. There was less certainty regarding the priority areas in recruitment, especially as relates to gender balance. A recent recruitment drive for occasional teaching staff has attracted 15 applications of which only 2 were from female candidates. Nine applications claim previous experience in distance learning, indicating a healthy pool of candidates for potential recruitment, which can be further explored for adding to the diversity of staff.
- The qualifications of teaching staff are adequate. They all possess doctoral degrees and have variable numbers of publications, which on the whole conform to their rank. The output of teaching staff addresses both regional audiences (being written in the Greek language and published by national Greek presses) and international audiences (published in English in peer-reviewed journals and other presses). These publications on the whole address the teaching areas of each of the staff. They are not, however, used as teaching material, missing the opportunity to integrate research findings into teaching.
- On the whole, full time teaching staff belong to a two-tier system, comprising two professors, one assistant professor, and a lecturer. Teaching time (7 weekly periods) is equally divided between tenured and untenured staff members. Of the 24 weekly teaching periods, the remaining 15 are taught by part-time staff. Of the part-time staff, there is one professor, two associate professors, two assistant professors, and one lecturer. Among all the above-mentioned staff, only a part-time lecturer is female.

- The programme director collaborates extensively with two members of the part-time staff, as well as with other staff at the department not involved in this programme. Other members of staff collaborate in the co-authoring of work and in project collaboration within and outside the department to various degrees. Some of the part-time staff collaborate amongst each other. The staff that the team met showed awareness of each other's areas of interest and exhibited a good degree of collegiality.
- Of the collaborative teaching staff on the programme, four are based in Greece and two in the Emirates. They have a range of expertise among them, and their publications indicate nationally significant academic standing.
- The teaching staff is engaged in professional and teaching-skills training that is especially designed for distance learning courses and offered on a needs basis whenever there is new staff.
- Assessment of the teaching staff takes account chiefly of their research activity. Opportunities for mobility are provided, and there was some indication that teaching activity is appreciated.

Strengths

- Members of the teaching staff are given initial training on the use of the technology involved in distance learning and have IT support throughout their teaching. They also benefit from an initial course carried out in collaboration with the Greek Open University on specific aspects of distance learning.
- Teaching experience with distance learning is a criterion for selection among the occasional teaching applicants.
- Members of staff largely teach on areas closely connected with their research.
- Visiting teaching staff come from Greece and the Emirates.
- There is a mix of staff across ranks and between FT and PT. Rank is on the whole consistent with qualifications.
- Student evaluations are conducted and taken into account.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- There was no indication of teaching observation taking place among staff. Teaching results and teaching skills appear to be solely assessed through student evaluations. Teaching observation could be instituted.
- Staff promotion, and the ranking of incoming staff, and therefore remuneration, appears to be based chiefly on publications. Formal criteria on assessing teaching quality could be instituted and included in the parameters for staff evaluation.
- Staff could draw more on their research for teaching, by integrating their work into reading lists. While their teaching connects closely with their research interests, there is a downside to this close correlation, in the sense that major aspects of IR and security are not adequately addressed (critical IR, human security, peace building, gender and security), possibly because they lie outside the comfort zone of teaching staff. Future recruitment drives might focus on the provision of more substantial teaching on these areas.

- Visiting teaching staff could be sourced from a wider variety of countries as well as from other HEIs in Cyprus.
- The teaching load is 62.5% placed on PT staff, who presumably comprise a mix of visiting professors and special teaching staff.

Note what is applicable for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3 or 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
3.1	The number of full-time teaching staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, and their fields of expertise, adequately support the program of study.	7
3.2	The members of teaching staff for each course have the relevant formal and fundamental qualifications for teaching the course, as described by the legislation, including the following:	
	3.2.1 Subject specialization, preferably with a doctorate, in the discipline.	8
	3.2.2 Publications within the discipline.	8
3.3	The program attracts visiting professors of recognized academic standing.	5
3.4	The specializations of visiting professors adequately support the program of study.	7
3.5	Special teaching staff and special scientists have the necessary qualifications, adequate work experience and specialization to teach a limited number of courses in the program of study.	N/A
3.6	In every program of study the special teaching staff does not exceed 30% of the permanent teaching staff.	N/A
3.7	In the program of study, the ratio of the number of courses taught by full-time staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, to the number of courses taught by part-time staff, ensures the quality of the program of study.	6
3.8	The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff supports and safeguards of the program's quality.	8
3.9	The teaching load allows the conduct of research and contribution to society.	9

3.10	Future redundancies / retirements, expected recruitment and promotions of teaching staff safeguard the unimpeded implementation of the program of study within a five-year span.	8
3.11	The program's coordinator has the qualifications and experience to coordinate the program of study.	9
3.12	The results of the teaching staff's research activity are published in international journals with the peer-reviewing system, in international conferences, conference minutes, publications etc.	8
3.13	The teaching staff are provided with training opportunities in teaching methods, adult education and new technologies.	8
3.14	Feedback processes for teaching staff with regards to the evaluation of their teaching work, by the students, are satisfactory.	7

In the following section clarification is provided on the numeric scoring provided above.

- 3.1 The staff, as described above, have adequate expertise to teach the course. The fact that they are all male with one exception of a female part-time lecturer seems to also have repercussions on the focus of the programme on conventional approaches to security.
- 3.2 The staff have a range of expertise and teach courses suitable to their interests. In discussions with the team they exhibited collegiality and enthusiasm for the courses they teach and the institution they serve.
- 3.3-3.7 Visiting professors support the programme of study to an adequate degree. They share the larger part of the teaching load, yet it is assumed that the special teaching staff among them do not exceed the 30% standard. The programme addresses aspects of regional and national politics but seems to lack visions for long-term prospects, including in areas of social development.
- 3.8 The student-staff ratio is commendable. Examples were provided of detailed feedback on students' work, indicating also an in-depth engagement with students' overall performance.
- 3.9 Staff are supported in dissemination and research activities. The teaching load allows time for research and staff engage in public activities.
- 3.10 The financial viability presentation indicated a strong direction of travel for the programme.
- 3.11 The programme coordinator has a great deal of experience. However, it was not quite clear what the local operation of the programme management was in terms of the role of the University Rector versus say the role of programme leader.
- 3.12 Teaching staff publish research in relevant journals and academic publishing houses.
- 3.13 Staff appear to be supported in terms of the level of training to undertake their role. However, the committee were not presented with a staff development and training policy in relation to the level of support provided. Basic training opportunities are provided, which could be bolstered.
- 3.14 Student feedback exists and is taken into account but there were no examples of how teaching has been modified in relation to this.

4 Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*
- *Information on students, like key performance indicators, profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, students' satisfaction with their programs, learning resources and student support available, career paths of graduates, is collected, monitored and analyzed.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior*

learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.

- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*
- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities).*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Students are involved in evaluating the teaching staff.*
- *Students' mobility is encouraged and supported.*

Findings

- There are not yet students enrolled in the present programme.
- There are pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification.
- The institution has indicated by its previous experience through the operation of other undergraduate courses that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.
- Students will receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.
- A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.
- Students are involved in evaluating the teaching staff through an online form, which the prospective students of the programme will have to complete and submit.

Strengths

- There are mechanisms for supporting students mainly through the establishment of the Pedagogical Planning Committee.
- Online resources are available to students, including educational material, web links etc.
- Through the use of tele-meetings, it will be easier for students and teachers to communicate, to interact with different forms of learning material and to participate in the learning procedure.
- The digital education platform (e-class) supports many services of synchronous and asynchronous communication, education, teaching and the learning process more generally.
- Student learning within the standard period of study is supported by student counselling through the e-class (digital educational platform), the six tele-meetings, the self-evaluation exercises, the comments made on assignments by the teachers and the predefined specific office meetings of teaching staff with the students and via email.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Consideration should be given to how distance learning students are engaged in the broader research and teaching community of the University.
- Further clarification should be given to how distance learning students are represented in terms of the formal structures for student representation within the University.
- Further consideration should be given to the structure of the study guides so that clarification can be provided in terms of the pattern of learning in relation to the organisation of the tele-meetings.

Note what is applicable for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3 or 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
4.1	The student admission requirements of the program of study, are based on specific regulations and suitable criteria.	6
4.2	The award of the higher education qualification is accompanied by the diploma supplement which is in line with the European and international standards.	9
4.3	The program's evaluation mechanism, by the students, is effective.	8
4.4	Students participation in exchange programs is compared favorably to similar programs across Europe.	N/A
4.5	There is a student welfare service that supports students with regards to academic, personal problems and difficulties.	7
4.6	Statutory mechanisms, for the support of students and the communication with the teaching staff, are effective.	7
4.7	Control mechanisms for student performance are effective.	N/A
4.8	Flexible options / adaptable to the personal needs or to the needs of students with special needs, are provided.	5

In the following section clarification is provided on the numeric scoring provided above.

4.1-4.2 The distance learning programme does not specifically state the level of student performance required at undergraduate level to progress to the MSc degree

programme. The degree programme has a wide recruitment of students from a range of educational backgrounds. The committee considered that a challenge of the programme would be to ensure sufficient coherence in terms of advance learning at Masters level versus the potential for a more generalized level of entry cohort.

- 4.3,4.6-4.7 Although the institution has indicated by its previous experience through the operation of other undergraduate courses that the program's evaluation mechanism by the students, the statutory mechanisms for the support of students and the communication with the teaching staff are effective, further clarification could have been provided with regard to the operational procedures at distance learning level given that the University has experience of running distance learning programmes.
- 4.5 More information could have been provided in relation to the operation and provision of welfare and broader pastoral care to students. The supporting information refers to documentation and policies that were not provided in the submission. Greater levels of clarity could be provided with regard to how distance learning students are supported vis-à-vis campus-based students.
- 4.8 There was an absence of specific information regarding the support provided to students. The supporting documentation needs to be clearer with regard to the policies that underpin the support provided to students. The discussions with staff did not provide sufficient clarification in this area for the committee to have full confidence.

5 Resources (ESG 1.6)

Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, financial, physical and human support resources*) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study program.*
* *Physical resources: premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, etc.*
Human support resources: tutors/mentors, counselors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Teaching staff is involved in the management of financial resources regarding the program of study.*

Findings

- The University has invested in physical on-campus resources to support the student learning experience. This includes the provision of whiteboards within classrooms and dedicated IT classes.
- For the distance learning provision, the focus of the resource environment is primarily concerned with the electronic learning platforms, the access to study materials and the support provided by academic and professional service staff. The University uses Moodle as an e-learning platform and provided a demonstration on the effectiveness of this resource to enable student learning. For the most part, the approach to the use of Moodle is to upload presentation information that supports lectures.
- Within the context of the distance learning provision, there is the additional Wiziq platform that enables a more interactive student experience, whereby students can engage through the use of a chatbox. Students are also able to pose questions to academic staff.
- Students benefit from a library provision that includes access to major electronic databases, e-books and e-journals. While this resource supports the student learning experience, it was not clear as to the extent to which students were to be fully prepared in the pedagogic shift in being able to undertake a distance learning programme and to be fully able to access materials. It was also noticeable that there was not an established practice for engaging with distance learning students in terms of their role as student representatives in the same manner as existed for campus-based students.

Strengths

- A strong library provision with an extensive range of e-books, e-journals and resources that support students learning at a distance.
- Dedicated out-of-hours support services for the library and information technology.
- The existence of a distance learning unit to support the delivery of provision.
- Detailed study packs with information relating to the course delivery and the student activities to be undertaken on a weekly basis.
- Experience of delivering distance learning provision on other programmes of study.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Further clarification on the exact operating arrangements for distance learning students in terms of the wider provision of campus-based University services. There was a lack of specific detail as to how existing student support services have been adjusted for distance learning provision.
- Consideration may be given as to how the distance learning unit integrates with other University support services, such as welfare and pastoral support.
- Consideration may be given as to how distance learning students can engage in a supportive learning environment that goes beyond the formal classroom experience. In other words, how can distance learning students replicate the informal conversations and learning that takes place outside of the classroom?

Note what is applicable for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3 or 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
5.1	Adequate and modern learning resources, are available to the students, including the following:	
	5.1.1 Facilities	8
	5.1.2 Library	8
	5.1.3 Infrastructure	8
	5.1.4 student welfare	6
	5.1.5 academic mentoring	7
5.2	Statutory administrative mechanisms for monitoring and supporting students are sufficient.	7
5.3	Suitable books and reputable journals support the program of study.	9
5.4	An internal communication platform supports the program of study.	9
5.5	The equipment used in teaching and learning (laboratory and electronic equipment, consumables etc) are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate.	9
5.6	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are adequate and accessible to students.	8
5.7	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are updated regularly with the most recent publications.	8

In the following section clarification is provided on the numeric scoring provided above.

5.1.1-5.1.3 Students have access to a good range of resources, including electronic databases.

5.1.4 More detail could have been provided with regard to the provision of welfare support services, including the availability of services to support the likes of dyslexia. It was unclear as to how support services would operate for distance learning students.

Further information could be provided with regard to how policies have been adapted to support existing distance learning provision and the lessons that the University has learned through this exercise.

- 5.1.5 The University appears to have an informal policy of academic mentoring. However, more clarity could have been provided with regard to the procedures in place for sharing good practice.
- 5.2 Student monitoring appears to take place in the context of attendance and academic performance at assessment boards. There does not appear to be a policy of early intervention, for example, to tackle under-performance by students.
- 5.3-5.7 The library and the general resource provision was strong. Indication provided that the resources required to deliver the programme had input from the academic staff involved in design and delivery, such as the provision of library resources, teaching materials and the recruitment of additional staff.

6 Additional for distance learning programs (ALL ESG)

Standards

- *The distance learning methodology is appropriate for the particular program of study.*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for distance learning, which is responsible for the support of the distance learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *Feedback processes for students in relation to written assignments are set.*
- *Specific plan is developed to ensure student interaction with each other, with the teaching staff, and the study material.*
- *Teacher training programs focusing on interaction and the specificities of distance learning are offered.*
- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on distance learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, guidance are set.*
- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with distance learning methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
 - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the program, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
 - *Presentation of course material, on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
 - *Weekly outline of set activities and exercises and clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*

- *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
- *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
- *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
- *Synopsis*

Findings

- Neapolis University of Pafos is a newly established university in the western part of Cyprus outside the main centres of Nicosia and Limassol. Although it is a very young university it has already experience of providing distance learning education, it has the necessary infrastructure and experienced teaching staff.

Strengths

- The new distance learning Master's course on International Relations, Strategy and Security can take advantage of the university's previous experience on distance learning. Since there are distance learning courses given, all the necessary technical infrastructure is already there.
- The level of technical functionality, for example the capacity and the speed of Internet traffic, is satisfactory.
- Library recourses are accessible electronically through the Internet, and there is a special unit to support teachers and students.
- Teachers have to participate in a specially-designed course for distance learning education so they can acquire the special pedagogical skills, but it would be good if versions of this course could be given to the distance learning teachers, new and old ones, regularly.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The proposed course is structured as a copy of conventional education. By following this strategy things that are working well in conventional education are supposed to work well in distance learning as well. For example, classroom lectures are replaced by teleconferencing. However, possible advantages with distance learning, like direct cooperation between students through peer-reviewing of individual projects or dissertations, have not been considered.
- The final thesis is mandatory, which is excellent, but the student does not have to be physically present for the oral presentation. This may cause a problem regarding the validation of the student's identity and the risk of being secretly supported during the presentation.

Note what is applicable for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3 or 4: Non-compliant

5 or 6: Partially compliant

7 or 8: Substantially compliant

9 or 10: Fully compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 10
6.1	The pedagogical planning unit for distance learning supports the distance learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment.	8
6.2	The institution safeguards the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and study guides/material of study.	6
6.3	The process and the conditions for the recruitment of teaching staff, ensure that candidates have the necessary skills and experience for distance learning education.	8
6.4	Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff, through appropriate procedures.	7
6.5	Student performance monitoring mechanisms are satisfactory.	8
6.6	Adequate mentoring by the teaching staff, is provided to students, through established procedures.	7
6.7	The unimpeded distance learning communication between the teaching staff and the students, is ensured.	9
6.8	Assessment consistency is ensured.	6
6.9	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) comply with the requirements provided by the distance learning education methodology and are updated regularly.	9
6.10	The program of study has the appropriate and adequate infrastructure for the support of distance learning.	8
6.11	The supporting infrastructures are easily accessible.	7
6.12	Students are informed and trained with regards to the available educational infrastructure.	6
6.13	Procedures for systematic control and improvement of the supportive services are set.	8
6.14	Infrastructure for distance education is comparable to university infrastructure in the European Union and internationally.	8
6.15	Electronic library services are provided according to international practice in	9

	order to support the needs of the students and the teaching staff.	
6.16	The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary electronic sources of information, relevant to the program, the level, and the method of teaching.	9

In the following section clarification is provided on the numeric scoring provided above.

- 6.1 Neapolis University Pafos provides teachers with necessary support and training. The distance learning pedagogical course should be given repeatedly and not only when new teaching staff is hired.
- 6.2 The interaction between students is possible but not promoted through the introduction of special tasks, for example peer-reviewing.
- 6.4 The training course given by the Greek Open University should be offered repeatedly and not only for newly hired teachers.
- 6.6 More detail could have been provided to highlight the complexities of providing mentoring in a distance learning environment.
- 6.8 No clear guidelines about assessment criteria for consistent assessment are provided. However, there are procedures established to handle and resolve complaints.
- 6.10 While the programme of study is supported by appropriate resources to ensure the meeting of necessary outcomes, further consideration might be given to the way that additional resources and best practice from other Universities could be integrated into the distance learning provision.
- 6.11 Further detail could be provided with regard to the operationalization of distance learning provision in terms of support services. The information that is provided at present primarily relates to the distance learning unit as opposed to a more holistic view of the way in which campus-based policies and procedures have been adjusted to take into consideration the distance learning provision.
- 6.12 Students are informed and supported but not trained in special courses on how to use the educational infrastructure.
- 6.13 Although there are special units and procedures for systematic control and improvement, they are mainly focused on technical aspects.
- 6.14 Further detail could be provided as to the way in which distance learning provision fully engages with the University support services and that distance learning students are given the same level of access and support as campus-based students, such career and welfare support.

C. Conclusions and final remarks

The committee enjoyed the opportunity to review the distance learning programme. The programme offers an innovative approach for students who are unable to attend on a face-to-face basis. The programme’s focus on security studies offers a unique positioning within the market. The committee enjoyed the discussion with members of staff and were grateful for the time and energy that they devoted and the materials that they had prepared in advance.

On the whole, the committee was of the opinion that the programme had good design elements and took confidence from the University’s existing distance learning provision. At the same time, however, the committee did consider that the review documentation did not provide as full an account of the strengths of the programme as might have been possible and did not take into consideration both the challenges of delivering a distance learning programme and the lessons that the University has learned from existing distance learning provision. In the above sections the committee has noted areas that they consider are worthy of further review. In many instances, this is likely to include the provision of policies and procedures that already exist. The committee does think that there is scope to consider the alignment of some of the courses to the programme and that there could be benefits from the provision of electives as well as clearer guidance for students as to how they progress through their studies to the dissertation. There could be an opportunity in this programme to develop approaches to engage students in a stronger peer review environment so as to provide a level of support and interaction that helps to replicate the classroom environment.

D. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof Alasdair Blair	
Prof Knud Erik Jørgensen	
Dr Olga Demetriou	
Prof Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos	
Mr Zenonas Hadjicostas	

Date: ...13 April 2019.....