

Higher Education Institution's
Response

Date: 06/07/2021

- **Higher Education Institution: Frederick University**
- **Town: Nicosia**
- **Programme of study, Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
In Greek:
Σχεδιασμός Μόδας και Εικόνας (4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο (BA))
In English:
Fashion Design and Image (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BA))
- **Language(s) of instruction: 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].

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)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

There is no selection mechanism via a portfolio and interview, which is standard practice in many European BA Fashion Design universities. Instead, the programme offers the bridging in the first year learning students the basics of arts and design which is an inclusive positive, student centred approach taking in account that Cyprus further education doesn't offer any art and design training. At the same time, it seems to have a challenge too since 25 % of the students drop out in the first semester. A short summer or taster course, or a couple of teaching days as part of the selection design making process by students could help to improve this by ensuring that prospective students are fully aware of the expectations required of them during the duration of their studies.

Response

As discussed during the visit, the 1st year of the programme works out as a bridging period for students who come without prior Art and Design experience. It is noted that the 25% drop-out rate occurs at the end of the year.

We agree with the EEC's recommendation for a taster course and to this end a drawing course is added and offered for free to registered students during the intensive/preparatory period that takes place during the four (4) weeks prior to the commencement of studies. This course will be done in parallel with the other preparatory courses offered to newcomers, e.g. English for English speaking programs, mathematics for engineering students, etc. The taster course will offer multiple benefits: allow students to acquaint themselves better with the Programme and the University, allow staff to better assess and prepare students for the Programme, and help students make a more informed decision whether their choice for studies was appropriate.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The university mission to focus on social engagement and UN goals could be more systematically embedded in the program and curriculum.

Response

The engagement in the UN goals by the University is relatively recent. An initial webinar has already been carried out towards the faculty and this will be reinforced and continue to include further details as well as methods which these goals can be embedded in all teaching material. It is noted that the University Council has approved the establishment of a center for professional development of staff in which the Vice Rectors participate ex officio and one of the subject areas of the center is the incorporation of Sustainable Development Goals in the University's teaching, research and policies. We therefore expect that embedding such goals into the curriculum will be achieved both systematically and speedily.

3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Student numbers are lower than the intake target, due to external factors as Covid-19. This is a worry and might need a University strategy and analysis: marketing, clearer communication. Art and design need more recognition and support especially in light of the fact that the creative industries seem to offer the job of the future.

Response

The University acknowledges the significance for Art and Design education and it is committed to expand its marketing strategy in providing clearer communication towards the importance for such education and its impact in the creative industry. Importantly, the issue of low numbers and the sustainability of the Program has been discussed between the Department and the university management and we are very happy to note that the Department enjoys the full support of the Management for the provision of necessary resources to ensure that the program, and the Department in general attracts an adequate number of students. Further to actions taken to increase local recruitment, the Department coordinates with the Communications and Outreach Service of the University for attracting students from Greece and other countries in the region.

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The main issue seems to be student progression. EEC recommends analysing the statistical data around drop out, reasons for drop out, student success rate and graduate destinations which might be helpful to develop a more effective strategy for a higher intake as well for reducing considerable dropout percentage rate. A more detailed and transparent marketing campaign might be helpful to manage student expectations regarding course content expectations and commitment.

Response

Statistical data are constantly examined at various levels. At departmental level these statistics make up the core analysis for the annual evaluation report of the department which is processed by the Internal Evaluation Committee. At administrative level these statistics are analyzed, resulting in actions for further development in the recruiting process. In the last 3 years the "Journey to My Success" campaign (through conventional and digital channels) of the University which uses real life

success stories by students, alumni and faculty, has proven as a successful tool in higher recruiting numbers in general and it is believed that this number is going to continue and increase further.

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

As noted and in addition to the existing resources some specialist machinery to support the production of stretch fabric could be beneficial and also give the course an additional USP. A basic LED light box would help students who have no previous experience of design developments to draw through designs and develop techniques. Further in the future the programme might want to consider specialist fashion software, now used in many institutions to support design and manufacturing processes.

Response

We thank the EEC for its recommendation which we accept and adopt. It is noted that Department Council is in constant search for the development and updating of the infrastructure and due processes are in place for this to happen through budgetary review. The suggestion for a specialist machinery to support the production of stretch fabric such as lycra, spandex as well as jerseys and knitted fabrics has been added to the Department's and has been approved. The facilities will be operational and in place from the coming Fall 2021 academic semester.

It is noted that two light boxes (A1 size) are already in place in the Fashion studio and this may have skipped the attention of the EEC, given that the assessment was conducted virtually. The presence of these light boxes is evident from the video that has been submitted.

We accept and agree with the EEC's recommendation that specialist fashion software should be considered in the future to support design and manufacturing processes. Indeed, this is something that is explored and will be put in action for the future enrichment of the programme, following the annual departmental infrastructure review. It is furthermore noted that, the department's effort is to pool

together resources between programs and schools in order to deploy infrastructure services that have broader use, such as the introduction of a laser cutting tool.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The virtual event undertaken by the EEC was extremely well organised with clear explanations of the Frederik University's macro environment and the robust systems in place which support the overall management and accountability processes that fully support the student experience. The staff team across all levels from senior management to individual course team members were fully engaged with the process, which made the evaluation from the EEC point of view straightforward and coherent.

In terms of the course BA Fashion Design with Image, which is being validated, it was clear that the team had developed the curriculum to be mapped not only against the standard requirements of a contemporary fashion programme but also against the localised requirements of the industry and job opportunities in Cyprus. This entails a broad approach to the course and the student journey which prepares the graduating student's to follow a variety of careers under the umbrella heading of fashion or to engage with further study if that was their intention. The staff team were committed and positive with a range of specialisms that fully informed the curriculum, whilst the open door policy and commitment to the students individual needs was excellent.

The staff were extremely candid about the difficulties in recruiting students, following a decline in numbers, through both the pressures on local finance as well as the current Covid-19 pandemic. However they were confident in returning to an appropriate cohort size in the near future. It may therefore be an opportunity for the University to support Fashion and Art and Design as a viable route for careers through a marketing exercise which uses ex students as case studies and promotes the creative industries as a viable and exciting career prospect. The creative industries of which fashion sits within are often considered of less importance to other subjects through both a parental lens and an academic one however, fashion and its satellite industries are in themselves a multi-billion dollar global business. Evidence suggests that future jobs will require creative approaches to new online and offline environments and the course is already enabling its graduates to engage in a variety of careers, albeit on a small scale, and this should be commended and celebrated.

Response

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Evaluation Committee for its useful insights and constructive suggestions which we accept and adopt.

Our commitment is to continually improve the Program of Study under evaluation and thus the Department's service to the society and the fulfilment of its mission. We believe that the evaluation process is central to achieving this and would like to thank again for the recommendations given and the useful insights provided during the various discussions held.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
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Prof. George Demosthenous Rector

Date: 06/05/2021