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

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Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 23rd of June, 2021

External Evaluation Report
(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:
  Frederick University**

- **Town:** Nicosia / Limassol

- School of Arts, Communication and Cultural Studies

- Department of Arts and Communication; Department of Architecture

  - **Programme of study:**
  In Greek:

  Αρχιτεκτονική Εσωτερικού Χώρου. (4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο (ΒΑ))

  In English:

   Interior Architecture, (4 Academic Years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BA))

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

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

- **Concentrations (if any):**
  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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. Introduction
This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The visit, conducted remotely on the 22nd of June, was made of an intense sequence of meetings with members of the University management team, the director of the Department of Arts and Communication, the coordinator and teaching team of the BA programme, and administration and support staff involved in the BA Interior Architecture programme. The EEC had the important opportunity to interview some alumni and present students, collecting a remarkable spectrum of different opinions and experiences.

Before the visit, the EEC received informational material on the structure and contents of the programme, the members of staff and management, and students' outputs, the University organization and life, in general, and material specific to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EEC received a limited number of recorded lectures and samples of students' work.

All meetings had the form of a free and open discussion; University members gave, cooperatively, a considerable amount of information and were very open to the dialogue. The members of the EEC had the opportunity to place questions and to ask for further explanation on all aspects of the programme. These open discussions were very useful to understand to the real character of the BA Interior Architecture programme and assess its strengths and weaknesses.

The members of the EEC would like to thank the Education Officer George Aletraris and Faculty, Staff, and Students of Frederick University for their friendly and open reception and cooperation.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Alessandro Rocca	Chair	Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Nikolaas Vande Keere	Member	Hasselt University, Belgium
Ersi Ioannidou	Member	Kingston University London, UK
Rositsa Rouseva	Student Member	University of Cyprus

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C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*

- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
      (a) *sub-areas*
      (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
      (c) *some questions that EEC may find useful.*

- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*

- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

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 EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*

- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*

- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development
   (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

    1.1 Policy for quality assurance
    1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
    1.3 Public information
    1.4 Information management

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme 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*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
    - *is designed with overall programme 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*
    - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
    - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*

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- *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
- *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
- *results in 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 programme 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, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*
  - *qualification awarded*
  - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *pass rates*
  - *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

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Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The representatives of the BA Interior Architecture programme made a clear presentation of their study programme and explained the relationship of the programme with the specific context of Cyprus.

Due to the background of the course, as part of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, the study programme focuses on a broad education in the field of design and other creative subjects. The learning outcomes seem to reflect this diversity and emphasise visualisation and presentation skills rather than knowledge in construction techniques and materials. The employability of the graduates is high in jobs related in the knowledge and skills taught in the BA and the course seems to be a good preparation for the professional market in Cyprus.

This is an Inter-Departmental Programme between the Department of Architecture and the Department of Art and Communication. The relationship with the department of Architecture is limited, but the proximity of this department offers at least logistical or infrastructural support (e.g., model-making workshop with the necessary equipment such as laser cutter).

For graduates of the course the opportunity to continue their studies in Frederick University is limited to a MA in Interdisciplinary Design. An international master (in collaboration with Greece and the US) is under development in Visual and Material Culture, a lecture-based course not focused on Design.

The meeting of the EEC with the students and graduates makes clear that:

1. The broad quality of the course indeed helps some graduates to enter more easily the professional market in Cyprus.

2. Many students note the lack of a technical and practical preparation to function as an interior architect and therefore choose to pursue further studies in Architecture at BA level at Frederick University or other institutions.

The EEC asked the students for an overview of the different design projects during the 4 years of study. Year 1 currently doesn't include a design project/studio. This is partly because some of the introductory courses are shared with the graphic design course. For year 2 and 3, the students refer to projects or objects, e.g. bus stop, pavilion, scenography of Romeo and Juliet, a chair, lamp, etc. Each year includes several small-scale projects. The EEC notes a lack of increase in complexity in the project briefs, scale and sites as the students progress from one year to the next. Some examples of final projects in year 4 confirm an interesting artistic and conceptual scope, but reveal at the same time the lack of spatial and conceptual complexity. The content of courses also seems not to be revised regularly. After asking for architectural and design references, the answers of students and graduates revealed a lack of a contemporary frame of reference.

The members of EEC understand the difficulties faced by the BA Interior Architecture programme and the challenges ahead. E.g., the limited number of students forces the study programme to be filled in in a flexible and realistic way. However, with the aim to assist the BA Interior Architecture programme at Frederick University to fulfil the standards expected for this kind of course at BA level and to develop an appropriate professional academic environment, the EEC also notes the necessity for improvements.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The study programme of the BA, as presented to us, looks balanced with various disciplines represented in the curriculum. It reflects the inter- or multidisciplinary approach of the teaching staff. The teaching team has qualifications that include various fields of design, visual arts, etc. The team and programme are flexible and capable to offer the freedom to the students to develop qualifications that can lead successfully to a personal and creative position in the Cypriot professional marketplace.

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.

If the BA Interior Architecture programme wants to inscribe itself in a European academic network regarding the discipline of Interior Architecture, we advise to amend the study programme:

- Design project/studio centred: the different courses need to be built up around design project assignments and the weighting in ECTS of the design project/studio needs to reflect that and be more significant.

- Although we understand the organisational choices are limited due to the small number of students, we still believe that the early introduction of the Design project/studio (in the first year) would be an important improvement, see also next point.

- We advise the BA Interior Architecture team to study and develop a programme with a gradual increase in complexity and ambition with regards to the design briefs according to comparable standards abroad and in tune with the latest research. The requested design outputs should focus on functionality, atmosphere and aesthetics of the spaces, incl. more detailed studies such as lighting, and furnishings.

- We note a lack of supportive technical courses for the Design project/studio, such as construction, technical installations (heating, water, …), climatic aspects, etc. A course on the technical principles, construction techniques and detailing of interior architecture will be very useful for the graduates of the course as demonstrated in our discussion with them. This knowledge could also be included in existing courses such as Material Applications.

- The EEC notes a (conceptual) difficulty of the BA Interior Architecture in positioning itself in relationship to the discipline of Architecture. We encourage further sharing and exchange with the Department of Architecture, as Architecture and Interior Architecture could evidently share teaching and learning methodologies and an academic field of research. This should be done, however, without compromising the identity of the BA Interior Architecture programme.

- The academic bibliography reveals a limited frame of reference and knowledge base in the field of Interior Architecture. The EEC encourages the teaching team to investigate and collect more recent academic literature in the field of Interior Architecture and Interior Design. Additionally, research in the academic field of interior architecture and the innovative field of research by design is necessary if an aspiration of the teaching team is to use research to inform teaching.

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Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment *(ESG 1.3)*

> ### Sub-areas
> **2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
> **2.2 Practical training**
> **2.3 Student assessment**

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *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.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *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.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*

- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the 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.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The various presentations of the BA Interior Architecture team demonstrate a dedicated commitment to student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.

The teaching and learning are based on a one-to-one approach, encouraging the students to express their concerns immediately and directly and allowing an open conversation and an informal and friendly learning environment.

The assessment model of the design project/studio is based on a balanced approach in which the process of the project and development of the student plays a larger role than the result (course work: 66% / final assessment 34%).

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The flexibility, engagement, and openness of the teaching team towards the students allow for an individualised or customised study trajectory throughout the four years.

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 feedback from students to the teaching team is via a written questionnaire. While this formal way of providing feedback is maintained, meetings between the teaching staff and students to discuss this in an informal manner could additionally improve feedback moments.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

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3. **Teaching staff** *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development
3.2 Teaching staff number and status
3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *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 programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *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).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

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- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The BA in Interior Architecture programme employs 14 members of staff which shares with other programmes of study in the Departments of Art and Communication, and Architecture. This brings into the course people from various educational and professional background and a wealth of expertise: Visual and Material Culture; History and Theory of Art; Architecture; Fine Art; Photography; Graphic Design and Interior Design. The number of staff is adequate to support the programme of study.

The teaching staff qualifications are excellent with undergraduate and post graduate studies in prestigious international institutions, such as University of Florence, Munich University of Technology and Royal College of Art, coupled with professional practice in their respective fields. The management and teaching team demonstrate a strong commitment to the University's aim for a contribution to the wider social context by sitting of boards/ and committees of governmental, cultural, and other institutions; initiating, participating, and organising cultural events; and generating "live briefs" that link the students with the local community, enterprises, and organisations.

The current teaching team offers a multiplicity of voices and inputs that supports the multi-interdisciplinary character of the course.

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Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The members of EEC recognise that the BA Interior Architecture at Frederick University has the following strengths:

- The programme coordinator and teaching staff are committed in creating an interesting and exciting curriculum that equips the students with knowledge and skills appropriate for a BA award.
- The multidisciplinary background of the teaching team allows the programme to equip the students with a strong set of skills that enables them to find employment in a variety of design-related jobs.
- The teaching team is attuned to the local society and its concerns, informing the curriculum through research into local context (e.g., airport of Nicosia "un-covered" project) and connecting the program with local businesses, institutions, and community through "live briefs".
- The current teaching team brings to the course a diversity of knowledge and skills. This is highly desirable as a team of people with varied experience in practice and academia has the capability to support the students to develop and pursue in their individual interests.

All members of staff come across as enthusiastic, engaged, and ambitious about the programme and its future.

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 concern of the committee is the lack of staff with expertise in the field of Interior Architecture and Design and a track record in discipline-specific research outputs. As a result, the expected synergies between teaching and research do not occur naturally and learning outcomes such as "Display awareness on the forefront of knowledge in the field of Interior Architecture and on the emerging spatial and material technologies" (Programme of Study, p.10) are not achieved.

With the aims:

- To strengthen the identity of the programme
- To place the course more securely within the context of equivalent European Interior Design/Interior Architecture programmes
- To grow the course by attracting international students
- To use research to inform teaching
- To create a "centre of excellence" in Art and Design in the next 5-8 years

The EEC recommends that:

- Any new members of staff should have expertise in Interior Architecture and Design and be able to use their research within the discipline to inform their teaching
- As a short-term measure, the content of the curriculum should be revised with up-to-date references to theory, history, and practice of Interior Architecture and Design

Another consideration when recruiting new members of staff should be gender equality within the management teaching team of the programme.

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The University should ensure that the current multiplicity of voices within the teaching team is maintained while supporting the team to clarify the identity of the programme with appropriate new appointments. To achieve the stated aims of growing the course through the recruitment of international students and with the long-term goal being to create a "centre of excellence" in Art and Design, the University should also aim to enlarge the foreign presence in teaching team and to enable and reinforce international networks.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Partially compliant

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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification *(ESG 1.4)*

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria**
> **4.2 Student progression**
> **4.3 Student recognition**
> **4.4 Student certification**

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *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.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The BA in Interior Architecture programme at Frederick University has an open entry policy regarding admissions. The university ensures that prospective candidates have a clear understanding of the programme and its contents through an induction series of events in September before students commit to a particular track of study. New students are provided close support in the first year to make sure that they do not abandon their studies at the first hurdle. The university assists the students to successfully complete their programme of studies by closely monitoring their attendance and academic progress and by scheduling two mandatory meetings with their dedicated advisor per year to discuss their progress.

The Student Handbook provides the students with all information required regarding expected attendance, assessment processes and regulations, and states clearly the deadlines for registration, dropping a course and course withdrawal. This assists the students to make decisions regarding the studies in an appropriate timeframe.

Strengths
A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Frederick University:

- ensures that prospective students have a clear understanding of the programme

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- supports the students throughout the 4 years of study by providing each student with a dedicate advisor that monitors their academic progress and overall experience of the course
- has in place a "peer tutor" scheme that assist students with their studies
- provides a Student Ombudsman Service that mediates between students and staff if any complains arise.

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 admission processes and criteria; student progression regulation and processes; student recognition regulations and procedures; and student certification regulations and processes are in line with European and international standards for equivalent courses.

The current admission process does not include an option to submit a portfolio of creative work or allow for other means for evaluating creativity. The BA Interior Architecture programme may want to incorporate this option into the admissions process.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

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5. Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **5.1 Teaching and Learning resources**
> **5.2 Physical resources**
> **5.3 Human support resources**
> **5.4 Student support**

Visiting in remote, unfortunately the EEC couldn't have a direct experience of the physical resources, such as studio spaces, workshops, laboratories, classes, library, social, sport and other facilities.

Through the presentation of professors and students, the EEC got the impression that the University is well organized, providing an updated library, with important online resources, model-making facilities, and classes.

The small number of the students register in this BA programme probably enables a very direct and comfortable contact between teaching staff and students and allows them to build a strong one-to-one relationship. In the context of the pandemic, the programme continued to operate successfully using appropriate software for the remote classes.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

6. **Additional for doctoral programmes** *(ALL ESG)*

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **6.1 Selection criteria and requirements**
> **6.2 Proposal and dissertation**
> **6.3 Supervision and committees**

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards
- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
    - *the stages of completion*
    - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
    - *the examinations*
    - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
    - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards
- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
    - *the chapters that are contained*
    - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
    - *the minimum word limit*
    - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
    - *regular meetings*

- o *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
- o *support for writing research papers*
- o *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Click or tap here to enter text.

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.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Not applicable
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Not applicable
6.3	Supervision and committees	Not applicable

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D. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The lack of a physical visit of the campus of Frederick University, due to pandemic restrictions, makes the Commission work more difficult and, for some aspects, incomplete. It was impossible, for example, to verify the quality of interior and outdoor spaces, such as workshops, library, classrooms, and other study and social facilities. Equally, it is hard to evaluate aspects related to physical interactions among people that are important for the quality of academic life. Nevertheless, thanks to the cooperative approach of all the actors involved, the main character, spirit, contents, and goals of the BA Interior Architecture programme at Frederick University are clear.

The BA programme explicitly wants to offer to its students the broadest spectrum of possible professional pathways. This goal involves the students to work on many different aspects of design (e.g., lighting design, furniture design, interior design), limiting the possibility for them to focus and deepen their knowledge of any of them. Listening to the former students, we realised that this multi-disciplinary education can be both an asset and a hindrance for the graduates. In some cases, graduates pursue further studies in Architecture, feeling that the curriculum was too light regarding practical knowledge on construction techniques and materials and as a result did not equip them appropriately to face the challenges of interior architectural design and construction in practice. In other cases, the alumni identified themselves as creative designers who can freely move between disciplines and means of representation and thus respond to a variety of work opportunities.

The EEC observed that there is no real distinction and hierarchy between theory and history courses, design studio courses and skill-based training. Listening to the students and reviewing information provided, the EEC believes that this distinction is not clearly made. The emphasis on vocational skills and their equal standing with design thinking and knowledge of history and theory is more suitable to college education (Further Education) than for the university level education (Higher Education).

Analogously, the distinction among disciplines which have different theoretical and practical bases seems blurred, like Architecture, Design, Applied Arts and Fine Art. On the one hand, this inclusive approach is a magnet to attract more students, offering the largest possibilities of employment pathways. On the other hand, the lack of deepening into a discipline-specific context and competences can generate some illusions about the available professional profiles and generate the unforeseen need of a further educational experience. The openness and inclusivity of the program, which invite students to design buildings, pavilions, furniture, textiles, etc. remind the structure of a BA in Applied Arts; a field that, nowadays, is mostly identified tout court as Design. In this context, the goal of the BA programme should be to provide and develop skills that allow its graduates to face the multiple fields of application of Design, such as industrial products, fashion, graphic, arts and crafts, as well as websites, industrial, commercial and social services, and other emerging virtual fields of application.

A quite critical point, evident from the format of the programme of study, and pointed out by some students, is the lack of scientific and technical knowledge courses. In a programme that contains the word Architecture, it seems necessary that the curriculum includes the techno-scientific sphere. This part is necessary not only to manage and solve practical problems, but more importantly to nurture the capacity to understand and imagine architectural space and its close connection to human activity and approach its design as a response to societal challenges and cultural trends. "Interior Architects create relevant environments for human activities", as written in the "European Charter of Interior Architecture Training 2020". Crucial questions of contemporary Interior Architecture and Design encompass technical challenges, such as habitability, comfort, energetic sustainability, construction materials, environmental performances; and social challenges, such as domestic lifestyles, workspaces, sociability, privacy and publicity, interpersonal relationship, equality, cultural and gender interchange, accessibility. It seems that the BA Interior Architecture programme at Frederick University, in its present course structure and content, does not equip its students to face these challenges, that are the base of Interior Architecture.

Summarizing observations and recommendations described in more detail in previous parts of this document, the EEC appreciates the obvious strengths of the BA programme: the small number of students, the availability of all the services, support, and interactions given by a mid-size multidisciplinary University, the presence of a faculty that appears young, dynamic, and highly motivated.

The EEC expresses concerns regarding the wide range of material covered by the courses, the lack of some fundamental theoretical and technical teachings; the unclear position of architecture inside a program; the lack of distinction and hierarchy between theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, studying and learning by doing.

Finally, to define a clear and strong identity in the field of higher education and research, the EEC suggests to the University to consider two possible directions for the current BA programme:

1. BA in Applied Arts, or BA in Design: Space and Objects

   The architectural component of the programme is currently not fully developed, while the complexity and multi-disciplinary nature has proven the potential to form a programme in its own right. This option is close to the current vision of the teaching team and has the ability to define a strong identity in the field of Applied Arts. This option can become a scientifically based strategy, (following the principles of total art), but should be theoretically framed and motivated, explaining explicitly the reason and the goal of this choice.

2. BA in Interior Architecture

   If the institution wants to apply to the standards of the discipline of Interior Architecture and participate in its academic field of research, we advise a) an improvement regarding the subjects that are central in the education of interior architects, e.g. the position of the design studio in the curriculum and the support of a technical course (as mentioned before) and b) the development of an expanding academic field of knowledge regarding the discipline, that can function as a resource for student training and academic research.

   (For European principles on the training of Interior Architecture, we refer to: https://ecia.net/media/556/ECIA%20Charter%202020.pdf; as an example of an interesting network of academics regarding Interior Architecture we refer to European Interior Educators, as a follow up of Interior Educators in the UK: https://interioreducators.co.uk/.)

The EEC hopes with this report to have contributed to the educational and academic status of Frederick University in Cyprus and abroad and wishes the department and all its members the best of luck.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Alessandro Rocca	
Nikolaas Vande Keere	
Ersi Ioannidou	
Rositsa Rouseva	

Date: the 23rd of June, 2021