Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 15/03/21

External Evaluation Report

(E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: Frederick University**

- **Town: Nicosia**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable): School of Business and Law**

- **Department/ Sector: Maritime Transport and Commerce**

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

  In Greek:

  Διεθνές Εμπόριο και Ναυτιλιακή Διοίκηση [3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ (MSc), Εξ αποστάσεως]

  In English:

  International Trade and Shipping Management [3 academic semesters, 90 ECTS, Master (MSc), Distance Learning]

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

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

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

2 March 2021

10:00 – 10:10

- **A brief introduction of the members of the External Evaluation Committee**

[10 minutes]

10:10 – 10:50

- **A meeting with the Rector - Head of the Institution and the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs – short presentation of the Institution**

[20 minutes]

Participants: The Rector, the Vice – President of the Council, the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs, the Vice Rector of Research, Development and International Relations.

- **A meeting with the members of the Internal Quality Assurance Committee**

[20 minutes]

Participants: The Vice Rector, Chair of the Internal Evaluation Committee (IQC), the School of Business and Law representative in the IQC, the Chair of the Distance Learning Unit.

10:50 – 11:50

- **A meeting with the Head of the relevant department.**
  Short presentation of the School's / Department's structure

[60 minutes]

Participants: The Dean of School of Business and Law, the Chair of the Department of Maritime Transport and Commerce, the BSc Maritime Studies Coordinator, the Vice Chair of the Department and members of the teaching staff

11:50 – 12:00

- *Coffee Break*   *[10 minutes]*

12:00 – 12:50

Programme 1 (Bachelor): BSc Maritime Studies

- **The programme's standards, admission criteria for prospective students, the learning outcomes and ECTS, the content and the persons involved in the programme's design and development**

[50 minutes]

Participants: The BSc Maritime Studies Coordinator and the Chair of the Department of Maritime Transport and Commerce

12:50 – 13:50

- *Lunch Break* *[60 minutes]*

13:50 - 14:50

- **A meeting with members of the teaching staff (Bachelor) on each course for all the years of study (QA session).**

  - **Discussion on the CVs (i.e. academic qualifications, publications, research interests, research activity, compliance with Staff ESG), on any other duties in the institution and teaching obligations in other programmes.**

  - **Discussion on the content of each course and its implementation (i.e., methodologies, selected bibliography, students' workload, compliance with Teaching ESG).**

  - **Discussion on the learning outcomes, the content and the assessment of each course and their compliance with the level of the programme according to the EQF.**

  - **Discussion on assessment criteria, samples of final exams or other teaching material and resources.**

[60 minutes]

Participants: The Chair of the Department of Maritime Transport and Commerce, the BSc Maritime Studies Coordinator and all the members of the teaching staff.

14:50 - 15:00

- *Coffee Break* *[10 minutes]*

15:00 – 15:40

- **A meeting with students and graduates only (5 – 15 participants - Bachelor).**

[40 minutes]

Participants: Students and graduates from the Bachelor programme

15:40 – 16:35

- **A meeting with members of the administrative staff and discussion on the virtual visit of the premises of the institution (i.e. library, computer labs, teaching rooms, research facilities).**

[55 minutes]

Participants: The Director of Administration and Finance, the Director of Studies and Student Welfare Service, the Director of Administration, the Director of Research and Interconnection, the Head Librarian

16:35 – 17:30

- **A meeting with the Head of the relevant department and the programme's Coordinator - exit discussion (questions, clarifications).**

[55 minutes]

Participants: The Dean of the School of Business and Law, the Chair of the Department of Maritime Transport and Commerce, the Vice Chair of the Department, the BSc Maritime Studies Coordinator

3 March 2021

10:00 – 10:10

- **A brief introduction of the members of the External Evaluation Committee**

[10 minutes]

10:10 – 11:50

Programme 2 (Master – Conventional): MSc International Trade and Shipping Management

&

Programme 3 (Master – Distance Learning): MSc International Trade and Shipping Management

- **The programmes' standards, admission criteria for prospective students, the learning outcomes and ECTS, the content and the persons involved in the programmes' design and development**

[100 minutes]

Participants: The Chair of the Department of Maritime Transport and Commerce, MSc Coordinator, the Dean of the School of Business and Law, the Vice Chair of the Department, the Chair of the Distance Learning Unit, the BSc Coordinator and members of the teaching staff

11:50 - 12:00

- *Coffee Break*   [**10 minutes**]

12:00 - 13:10

- **A meeting with members of the teaching staff (Master) on each course for all the years of study (QA session).**

  - **Discussion on the CVs (i.e. academic qualifications, publications, research interests, research activity, compliance with Staff ESG), on any other duties in the institution and teaching obligations in other programmes.**

  - **Discussion on the content of each course and its implementation (i.e., methodologies, selected bibliography, students' workload, compliance with Teaching ESG).**

  - **Discussion on the learning outcomes, the content and the assessment of each course and their compliance with the level of the programme according to the EQF.**

o **Discussion on assessment criteria, samples of final exams or other teaching material and resources.**

[70 minutes]

Participants: All the members of the teaching staff

13:10 - 14:00

- **A meeting with the distance learning committee.**

[50 minutes]

Participants: The Chair and members of the Distance Learning Unit

14:00 – 15:00

- *Lunch Break*   *[60 minutes]*

15:00 – 15:40

- **A meeting with students and graduates only (5 – 15 participants - Master).**

[40 minutes]

Participants: Students and graduates from the MSc programmes

15:40 – 16:00

- **EEC's meeting**

[20 minutes]

16:00 – 16:45

- **A meeting with the Head of the relevant department and the programmes' Coordinators - exit discussion (questions, clarifications).**

[45 minutes]

Participants: The Dean of the School of Business and Law, the Chair of the Department of Maritime Transport and Commerce, the BSc Maritime Studies Coordinator

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Prof Albert Veenstra	Professor	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Prof Nikos Nomikos	Professor of Shipping Finance and Risk Management	The Business School (formerly Cass), City, University of London
Prof Jens-Uwe Schroder-Hinrichs	Professor	The World Maritime University
Prof Santi Caballe	Professor	Open University of Catalonia
Mrs Margarita Panagi	Student Representative	Cyprus University of Technology
Name	Position	University

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*
  - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
  - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*

- o *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*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *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*
- o *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:*
  - o *selection criteria*
  - o *intended learning outcomes*
  - o *qualification awarded*
  - o *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - o *pass rates*
  - o *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - o *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

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

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 MSc program in International Trade and Shipping Management is a 90 ECTS program.

The design of the program is again a reflection of the needs of industry. Students have very good prospects in terms of being absorbed by local shipping businesses.

Information management standards and public information standards for the program are good. The university provides a good level of learning resources, access to library and shipping databases, and support for the career paths of the students.

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

The connection to the industry of the program content, as well as contacts offered by the staff can be considered a strong point of this program. Alumni are also very positive about this aspect of the program. The fact that the program is offered in English is seen as a competitive advantage by students and graduates.

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 committee observed that the intake of the own BSc students into the MSc is limited. Nevertheless, the BSc students should be a relevant stream in the intake of the MSc program, even if this is after a few years in the industry.

The committee would also like to point out that the viability and potential of the MSc program will be greatly enhanced with the increase in the research content. After all, this is an MSc degree and the research part should be at the core of the curriculum. This will also enhance the skillset of graduates and will enable them to progress to higher level managerial positions.

Finally, the learning outcomes in the module specifications need to be streamlined and modified to reflect the learnings objectives of an MSc degree. It is recommended to revise the entire structure of intended learning outcomes for the program as a whole and all the underlying courses, stick to a hierarchical taxonomy, and reduce the number of ILOs overall.

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

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

eqar//// enqa.

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
2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

---

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

Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - *among students*
  - *between students and teaching staff*
  - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning 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 e-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

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *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 e-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.*

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and 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 programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  - ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
  - *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*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

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

eqar//// enqa.

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?*
- *How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *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 MSc is designed to equip the students with the skills required for a career in the world of shipping. The program is tied strongly to the needs of the Cypriot shipping industry and teaching methods include case studies and other problem-oriented approaches as expected from a Masters level program.

The nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study. The university's distance learning

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

eqar//// enqa.

quality assurance is evaluated by external and voluntary accreditations, such as the E-xcellence label by EADTU.

The university's learning management system supports online teaching, learning and administrative processes. This is a Moodle installation with all the basic online services available. The platform usage is combined with Zoom to specifically provide synchronous tools to support the online interaction needs of students with the instructors and the other students. The platform also provides e-assessment procedures through quizzes for students to self-assess their knowledge though it is a feature still under development with room for improvement. In addition, the provision of more complex forms of e-assessment to assess complex competences and skills, such as critical thinking, was not shown.

The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a weekly study guide that includes relevant information: learning outcomes, learning and teaching strategy, assessment procedures, material to use, activities to perform, lab-supported practical tasks, self-assessment exercises, primary and complementary bibliographic references and recommended study time. Each course has an adequate number of hours of synchronous communication between instructors and students.

Formative assessment of the courses is based on submitted assignments with provision of detailed feedback during the course counting up to 50% of the final grade while summative assessment is based on a mandatory final onsite exam counting at least 50% of the final grade. Assessment procedure is completed with a number of online quiz-based assignments during the course and collaboration activities. Non graded formative (self-evaluation) activities are included in the weekly study guides in order to self-evaluate student knowledge and skills of the course.

Collaboration among instructors and students (and among students) is conducted through the online forums of the subject and other forums that can be created ad-hoc for facing special needs. In addition, collaboration among students is promoted by collaborative activities during live lectures and in virtual laboratories.

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

A general strength of the MSc is the close relationship between the faculty and the industry, which ensures that the program and its courses reflect relevant knowledge and insights from the industry. This also results in the crucial role the faculty plays in steering students to jobs in the industry. This is greatly appreciated by students in the program. The students consider the teaching qualities of the faculty very positively.

The EEC believes that continually evaluating the quality assurance of distance learning by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations is a good practice.

The EEC considers the simplicity of the distance learning model to be in line with the specific profile of students who need to learn effectively and in timely fashion. The provision of personalized and detailed feedback in the submitted assignments and during the teleconference sessions is considered good practice. The weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week, is also considered a best practice. The EEC urges the

university to keep up these strong elements of the learning model while reinforcing them when possible.

The EEC recognizes the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities organized in online teams, though it was not detailed the procedure, assessment and specific support available for these activities.

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 committee recommends giving a greater role to the research that is carried out by students in their theses. Various teaching faculty have indicated they use some of this material in their classes, but this has an informal character. We recommend that the course management team provides an annual review of thesis topics and research results achieved in MSc thesis projects that should be made available at Departmental level.

The EEC considers that onsite final exams may not be in line with the learning style of online students, and formative continuous assessment during the course could be reinforced instead.

From the documentation provided and the information gathered from the meeting, it was not clear if formative assessment provides feedback based on rubrics, neither whether these rubrics are shared with students. In addition, the use of peer-assessment as well as gamification strategies are encouraged to increase the student levels of motivation and engagement with the e-assessment process. Finally, more sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents could be considered to support immediate and automatic feedback to students and self-evaluate their advances.

The university' learning management system (Moodle) provides learning analytics tools for monitoring student performance based on collecting information from the student with lower grades, poor participation or with undelivered activities. In addition, the instructors also collect related information based on their own experience and means. The EEC believes that more sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI and specifically machine learning could be used to monitor and predict student performance and dropout in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures. This is strongly recommended in case of university's expansion plans through increasing the academic portfolio and student ratio per virtual classroom.

While the EEC emphasizes the benefits of any form of collaboration among students, the online synchronous collaboration among students was perceived as problematic if the program is open internationally and attended by students across separated time zones. It was not clear how the university would support this type of collaboration from the coordination perspective.

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
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Compliant

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

eqar/// enqa.

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.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *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).*

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

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

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

- *Is the teaching staff qualified to teach in the e-learning programme of study?*
- *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.

The teaching staff of the MSc is a well-balanced group of teachers that are appreciated by students and are sufficiently knowledgeable in their various field of teaching. We find that the balance between faculty and visiting and special teaching staff is appropriate.
At the same time, has a limited involvement in research. We have made recommendations on this elsewhere in this report.
The university provides effective and practical training programs to faculty members in the form of professional development workshops and seminars relevant to distance learning.

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

The faculty has been involved in a process of differentiating their teaching and assessment methods for the MSc, tailoring the program to the expectations of the industry for Masters level graduates. The teaching methods involve case studies and practical exercises and are, as such, appropriate for this program of study.

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.

We recommend that teaching staff develops a more structured approach to integrate their research into teaching, as well as the research activities of students. This is not aimed at developing a separate research effort, but a departmental research strategy that supports the teaching (and the industry) in the short- and long-term.

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	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Partially compliant

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

eqar//// enqa.

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*

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

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

eqar//// enqa.

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.

Issues related to student admission, progression and recognition are documented in the Student Handbook and the University Prospectus. The interviews carried out by the panel as part of this accreditation visit did not result in any deviations from the published standards and procedures which in the view of the panel reflect international standards and are in compliance with the regulations in Cyprus.

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

The regulations and practices of the University are outlined in a very detailed way in the Student Handbook and the University Prospectus and therefore give any potentially interested candidate a very good overview about student admission, progression and recognition of earlier academic achievements.

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 review of information and material provided in relation to the MSc program, as well as the interviews conducted during the visit, did not result in suggestions for improvement in this area.

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

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**

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *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.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *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.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*

- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

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 university has a distance learning unit responsible for providing pedagogical and technical support for designing, creating, implementing and evaluating online courses. The unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative and summative assessment. The university also provides a handbook with academic regulations underpinned by the university procedures and policies with guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning in particular that establishes the main characteristics a distance learning course should have. It is a good reference that guarantees the quality and homogeneity across all the distance learning courses. However, the handbook was neither found in the documentation nor shown during the meeting.

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

The committee was very pleased to see that the research ambitions of the program are supported by the appointment of project support staff. This decision also shows a certain adaptability of the department and the School in realising new ambitions and achieving goals for the program and the department.

The distance learning unit, even if not shown in detail during the meeting, is considered a best practice, due to its potential structure, resources, infrastructures and services devoted to enhanced distance learning. The EEC believes that it can be a powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the provided teaching while providing a good ground to faculty members to face distance learning.

The EEC also believes that continually evaluating the quality assurance of distance learning by non-mandatory external accreditation organizations is a good practice.

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

eqar//// enqa.

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.

While the university facilities and student support services are at an excellent level, it may be worthwhile to consider how research carried out by faculty members in the Department may be better integrated into the programme.

The EEC suggest that some considerations should be taken into account to the video lectures and video materials to be more usable and accessible for students: make them short, include the teacher in all the videos to provide non-verbal communication, and add subtitles for accessibility.

Even though the online courses include a good variety of learning materials (e-books, videos, papers, etc.) which is good for distance learning, they were not shown during the meeting in detail.

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

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 nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study.

The External Evaluation Committee would like to re-iterate a number of positive points that came out of this review. In particular, the following aspects are points of strength on which the Course management team should build upon further in order to guarantee future growth and success:

- An experienced academic team with strong links with the local shipping and business communities
- Courses that are well organised and are attuned to the needs and requirements of the local market thus providing students with solid practical skills.
- Strong links with the local shipping and finance clusters that enhances the employment prospects of graduates.
- Good administrative support (student affairs, IT, Library personnel).

At the same time, the learning outcomes in the module specifications need to be streamlined and modified to reflect the learnings objectives of an MSc degree. It is recommended to revise the entire structure of intended learning outcomes for the program as a whole and all the underlying courses, stick to a hierarchical taxonomy, and reduce the number of ILOs overall.

In addition, the absence of a research culture and lack of a clearly defined research agenda is something that the courses need to address in order to maintain their competitiveness.

Finally, the fact a number of experienced visiting faculty are going to retire over the next few years will also affect the courses. The management team must draw alternative plans by drawing upon the expertise of industry contacts and alumni.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature	
Prof Albert Veenstra		
Prof Nikos Nomikos		
Prof Jens-Uwe Schroder-Hinrichs		
Prof Santi Caballe		
Mrs Margarita Panagi		
Click to enter Name		

Date: 15 March 2021