

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 30/3/21

- **Higher Education Institution:**

University of Nicosia

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

In Greek:

Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (4 έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Business Administration (4 years/240 ECTS, Bachelor of Business)

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

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



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



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The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].



A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.1.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

Introduction and overall assessment

We refer to the report of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the evaluation-accreditation of the program of study 'Bachelor's in Business Administration' (henceforth BBA), which was prepared following a virtual visit at the University of Nicosia by the members of the EEC on the 12 and 13 November 2020.

We would like to thank the EEC members for their insightful questions and comments during the evaluation of the program and their recommendations in this report. We would also like to note that we appreciate greatly the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation.

The EEC report is very positive with high scores and favourable comments on all sections and categories. We are extremely happy that no indicator was not found to be non-compliant. The members of the EEC made several positive comments including the quality and commitment of teaching staff, the support offered to students [which] was described as exceptional and the fact that the various programmes focus on delivering content that is relevant to practice.

The EEC also made a number of recommendations for improvement. We do appreciate these suggestions which will enhance the quality of our program. We will be addressing them in the corresponding section of this response.

In the following sections we present the comments and suggestions of the EEC and we provide our comments (if any) and the actions taken to address the comments. In order to simplify and make this response report easier to read, we state the EEC findings and strengths for each section together and then we summarise the constructive feedback of the Committee and our response.

Based on the EEC's evaluation report, we are looking forward to the accreditation of the program.



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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

Findings

We do appreciate the EEC's assessment and feedback. The EEC reports that:

"The Department appears to follow the university regulations that exist in relation to quality assurance expectations and based on the written reports and our virtual visit these appear to be largely in line with what one would expect for the programmes of study. There appears to be a strong desire by the leadership and faculty on a collective basis to work together on having high quality programmes being offered to students. In addition, other key stakeholders have involvement in quality assurance including students and external industry representation. There are overall programme objectives in place for all programmes, along with associated learning outcomes at both the programme and module levels though there is scope for reviewing these in context of being able to assure/measure student achievement of these. Student progression and success appeared to be very positive across the programmes under consideration."

Strengths

In addition, the EEC notes the following strengths:

"Programmes follow the university regulations on quality assurance processes.

Employability rates of students across the programmes appear strong ranging >85% on BBA to >90% for MBA.

Pass rates appear to be very strong which is unsurprising given the exceptional level of support offered by staff.

Modules within the programme appear to be largely kept current and updated regularly."

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC identified some areas of improvement and made recommendations. These are listed below (in Italics) and responses/actions are presented.

"You should consider revising both programme and module learning outcomes so that they are more easily discernible in terms of students meeting them or not."

"Consider reducing the number of learning outcomes in some modules in particular. There is a wide range from 5 or 6 to upwards of 15 in some modules and based on the hours involved in teaching and expected student learning hours it is not clear how all could be key learning outcomes."

"Using Bloom's taxonomy to develop learning outcomes appropriate for each level could help (for example 'apply' is not a high level outcome that one would be expected to get from an MBA programme)."

Response/Action:

We thank the EEC for these comments. They have initiated a fruitful discussion between the Program Coordinator, the Head of the Department, the Dean, other faculty members and external stakeholders about the programme's learning goals, objectives, outcomes and their assessment. Particular care was given to revising learning outcomes in a way that they are more easily discernible in terms of students meeting them or not. Learning outcomes in modules have also been reconsidered and revised. In cases where the number of learning outcomes was high, these have been reduced. The revised course syllabi maybe found in the Appendix (Part III). Bloom's taxonomy was taken into consideration when making these revisions. The revised program goals, objectives and learning outcomes are presented below.

The BBA programme has four main goals, that is to promote:

LG1: Business related theoretical knowledge and enhance students' application ability

LG2: Students' managerial skills and leadership potential

LG3: Business analysis and decision-making ability

LG4: Students' communication skills

The programme's learning objectives are to:

- LO 1.1. Present and explain main theoretical concepts in key areas of business and the students' chosen concentration.
- LO 1.2. Demonstrate how to apply the above knowledge in the solution of business problems.
- LO 2.1. Provide tools for and experience in working in multicultural teams.
- LO 2.2. Train students in leading ethically and in a sustainable manner in an environment of constant social, economic and technological change.
- LO 3.1. Offer tools for and practice in analyzing business related information
- LO 3.2. Enhance critical thinking for the purpose of improving strategic decision-making
- LO 4.1. Develop students' writing skills in relation to business
- LO 4.2. Cultivate students' presentation skills

The programme's learning outcomes are the following:

On completion of the BBA degree, graduates are expected to be able to:

- Outline and discuss main theoretical concepts in key areas of business and students' chosen concentration
- Apply the above knowledge in the solution of business problems
- Work in multicultural teams and manage a diverse workforce
- Lead ethically and in a sustainable manner
- Analyze business related information



- Think critically in business related scenarios and make informed strategic decisions
- Write effectively in discussing business problems
- Present eloquently business analysis and decisions

“Greater clarity on how much assessment exists across the programme is needed and its relevance to the programme learning objectives. An assessment matrix for both the BBA and MBA programmes are recommended and in so doing there should be included considerations of how assessment maps explicitly to the programme learning outcomes.”

☑ Response/Action:

For the BBA modules, assessment normally includes a midterm and a final exam and, depending on the module, it may also include a project/assignment, participation, presentations and groupwork. The assessment for each module is specifically designed to achieve the module’s learning outcomes but also modules’ assessment contributes to achieving the program’s learning objectives and outcomes. Two tables have been created to show the linkages between assessment and programme learning outcomes. In the first, the Core Business Administration courses are mapped to the programme’s learning goals and objectives and, in the second, an assessment matrix shows how the programme’s learning outcomes are linked to assessment. Please note that the tables are more indicative rather than comprehensive as to the courses/assessment methods that contribute to the achievement of the programme’s objectives and learning outcomes.

Table 1. BBA Curriculum Map: How Core Courses Contribute to the Achievement of Programme Goals and Objectives

Learning Goals	Learning Objectives	ACCT-110/1	BADM-121	BADM-230	BADM-234	BADM-431	BADM-439	BADM-475	BADM-493	ECON-261/2	MGT-281	MIS-351	MKTG-291
LG1	LO1.1	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
	LO1.2	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
LG2	LO1.2							√				√	
	LO2.1		√					√					
LG3	LO3.1	√				√	√			√			√
	LO3.2		√		√			√					
LG4	LO4.1			√	√			√	√				
	LO4.2						√						√



Table 2. BBA Assessment Map: How, Where and When Learning Outcomes are Being Assessed

Learning Outcomes	How assessed	Where assessed (indicative)	When assessed
Outline and discuss main theoretical concepts in key areas of business and the students' chosen concentration	Exams	BADM-475	Spring
Apply the above knowledge in the solution of business problems	Projects	BADM-493 BADM-439	Spring
Work in multicultural teams and manage a diverse workforce	Groupwork	MIS 151	Fall
Lead ethically and in a sustainable manner	Case study	BADM-121	Spring
Analyze business related information	Exams	FIN-266	Fall
Think critically in business related scenarios and make informed strategic decisions	Assignment	BADM-234	Spring
Write effectively in discussing business problems	Homework	BADM-332	Fall
Present eloquently business analysis and decisions	Presentation	COMM-200	Spring

"It is recommended that the Department undertake more reflective reviews where they identify specific areas of focus in the short and medium term."

Response/Action:

For the BBA program a considerable revision of the concentrations (please see Section 3). This reflects a strategic decision in terms of the areas of focus.



2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Findings

We welcome the very positive feedback of the EEC on student support. The Committee stated that, *“The support offered to students by teaching staff is exceptional. It was very evident from site visit meetings that there is a passionate and engaged teaching team where the interest of students are both centre and above all else.”*

The Committed also noted that, *“While this can be viewed as exceptional there are also concerns as to whether it amounts to far too great a degree of ‘hand-holding’ of students at these levels of study. Consequently, there are some concerns in respect to whether the balance is right in terms of being so student focused that less responsibility is taken by the student to proactively take control of their learning. As very limited detail was provided on assessment it was not possible to make a proper evaluation (e.g. we didn’t see assessments/exams etc) however based on assessment activities listed on the module outlines some concerns exist.”*

Strengths

The EEC also noted the following strengths in relation to teaching, learning and student assessment:

“Programmes offer distance and in person options so there are different modes of delivery open and students were positive towards this.”

“The vast majority of module outlines appeared to be current and up-to-date in terms of key reading materials and content.”

“There is a very strong mutual respect evident between faculty and students.”

“Some good use of modern teaching methods across programmes.”

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC has identified some areas of improvement and made recommendations. These are listed below (in Italics) and responses/actions are presented.

“It is recommended that faculty consider whether students are taking enough of an active and leadership role in their learning process. While students were very complimentary, we would have some concern as to whether a greater sense of autonomy could be instilled in students especially at an MBA level.”

Response/Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. Even though this comment relates more to the MBA as noted above, some comments are made in relation to the BBA. In the BBA, a more active role in learning is encouraged throughout the program and especially in the final years of the students’ degree by having students work in groups, on individual assignments, on cases, in research projects and in presenting their work. Also, during the



last few years methods such as case-based learning and project-based learning, are increasingly used in a number of modules. We will continue to work towards encouraging independence of thought, critical thinking and autonomy in learning while providing the best pastoral care.

“There is a need to consider the level of assessment on the programme. Specific regard should be given to how assessment ties together across the programme to achieve the programme learning outcomes and whether some tasks could be cut back (i.e. address possible over-assessment). An assessment matrix across the programme would be welcome that shows explicit links to learning outcomes.”

Response/Action:

We thank the members of the EEC for this suggestion. Assessment is linked to the programme’s learning objectives and outcomes as discussed in Section 1, and presented in Tables 1 and 2. In most cases, module assessment includes a midterm and a final examination and, in some cases, it might also include other elements such as active participation, assignment/project work and/or presentation. The exams are scheduled this way with the aim to divide the material into more manageable parts and assist learners absorb the module’s knowledge and develop the sought skills. The use of exams in modules’ assessment follows the framework of regulations of the University and the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance are carefully observed. The other assessment parts are included when deemed useful to encourage more active participation in the learning process, application of theoretical concepts in assignments/projects or improvement of communication skills – all important elements, we believe, of learning processes. We acknowledge that assessment needs to be carefully tied to module and programme learning outcomes and we will continue to review and revise assessment methods for this to happen, taking care to avoid over-assessment.

“Some module outlines need to be updated in terms of key reading lists being more current.”

Response/Action:

All module outlines have been reviewed carefully and reading lists have been updated to reflect recent developments (Business Administration courses that have been updated are included in the Appendix (Part III)).



3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

Findings

We thank the EEC for the positive comments in relation to faculty qualifications, commitment and their research activity. The complete comments of the EEC are presented below.

“The documentation and meetings demonstrated a high quality and committed teaching staff. The vast majority are PhD qualified with most being research active. It wasn’t clear if formal teaching qualifications were common or supported in the university. The staff was receiving compulsory additional training in elements such as online teaching. It needs to be noted that this additional training was not taken into account as workload, but it was added as a task over and above the normal working commitments.”

The engagement with subject specific academic research varied. Some of the academics are indeed producing a lot of internationally rated outputs, while others prefer to focus more on teaching and less in research. Monetary incentives (sic)

The normal workload appeared to be 3 courses per semester, but it seems that there is the option to apply for some reduction if the research output is significant. It was somewhat surprising that there is no clear allocation for the supervision of the PhD researchers.

Positively, in spite of what appears to be very substantial workloads, improvements in the quality of research output have been evident. We would have concerns as to the current staffing situation believing that there is a need for substantial investment in additional teaching staff to be able to deliver the low student classes, multiple programme pathways, while not negatively impacting on the positive improvements made on research outputs.”

Strengths

The EEC notes the following strengths:

“A highly committed teaching staff was clearly evident from multi-stakeholder meetings. We commend the strong team-based approach that came across during the site visit.

Well qualified teaching staff.

Year on year improvements in faculty research outputs evident.

The teaching reduction scheme is a welcome support for research.”

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC has identified some areas of improvement and made recommendations. These are listed below (in Italics) and responses/actions are presented.

“Workloads appear very high which will ultimately prove detrimental to furthering high quality research and increasing in key rankings.”

Response/Action:

We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. In the last few years, the University has been going through a transition from a teaching-oriented to a research-oriented institution. In the early stages of this process, it might well have been true that workloads had been high and a hindrance to investing time in research. In the last few years, however, the research time release scheme has significantly improved the situation and faculty now have more time to invest in research, something that is reflected in research output and rankings. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings by Subject 2021 for example has ranked the University among the top 301-400 universities in the world in the subject area of Business and Economics, which places the University of Nicosia as the #1 ranked university in Cyprus and Greece, and among the Top 100 universities in the European Union, in this subject area. We will continue to examine how to utilize faculty time in a way that maximizes the potential for high quality research.

“There is a need to consider the investment in additional faculty to deliver on the Department’s mission. Much concern exists over the continued viability of the existing staff being able to undertake the level of teaching that they do and maintain research active status.”

Response/Action:

We thank the EEC for this recommendation. We strive to achieve a good balance between research and teaching. The decrease in the number of concentrations as detailed below is a step towards this direction. We will continue to work towards releasing faculty members from any extra administrative and teaching assignments so that they remain research active.

“There is merit in considering whether so many concentrations make sense in the undergraduate programme. Some concentrations appear more general and lack clear cohesions for a concentration, while the number and expertise of staff to deliver all concentrations looks problematic. It is recommended to consider having less concentrations on this degree.”

Response/Action:

This comment has been carefully considered by the Department and School. After several deliberations it has been decided that the number of concentrations will be reduced from six to four: (1) Management and HR, (2) Marketing, (3) Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and (4) Finance and Economics. The concentration courses of Entrepreneurship and Innovation and Finance and Economics, remain the same. For the other two concentrations, the ‘Revised structure of the program of study’ and the ‘New concentrations’ course descriptions’ are attached in the Appendix (Parts II and III respectively).

“It is recommended to consider further encouragement of faculty to be research active and to pursue a quality over quantity approach in this.”



Response/Action:

We thank the EEC for this comment. In the last few years, the number of publications per faculty has increased significantly. More recently, guided actions have been promoted to ensure advancement in both quantity and quality of publications. This is reflected in the figures of the last three years for example. According to University data, the total number of Scopus indexed publications for the School of Business has increased from 32 in 2018 to 95 in 2020 and at the same time the percentage of these documents in Q1 and Q2 of the Scopus indexed publication lists has gone up from 50% to 70% (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. Scopus Indexed Publications of School of Business Faculty, years 2018-2020

Year	No of Docs	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	NA
2018	32	9	7	8	1	7
2019	47	29	6	10	0	2
2020	95	54	12	26	1	2

In addition, publication in ABS higher ranked journals is increasingly encouraged in the Business School. This, in parallel with a newly established university wide scheme that compensates faculty based on the Scopus quadrant a new publication belongs to, is expected to contribute further to a culture of conducting and publishing quality research.

“Consider whether greater synergies could be achieved in offering of modules. This may include considering larger classes than 30 students in some modules which would provide some potential workload benefits.”

Response/Action:

Regarding class sizes we follow the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance guidelines which include some restrictions in the maximum number of students per class. Within this framework we aim to achieve the maximum possible synergies between classes.



4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Findings

The EEC made the following comments in relation to this section of the report:

“The teaching history of the institution seems to have secured very detailed regulations for student entry and recruitment. All the information is well documented and accessible to all interested parties.

The system seems to be relatively centralised in the University level, with limited investment in department level support.

The various programmes seem to have a focus on delivering content that is relevant to practice and there is an interest for international co-operations with other institutions and practitioner bodies that can provide accreditations.”

Strengths

The EEC also noted the following strengths:

“Very detailed regulations that are well articulated.

Competent systems that capture student performance.”

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC made the following comment:

Given the size of the institution one could consider whether there is overregulation

Response/Action:

It is true that there are clear guidelines in terms of student entry and student performance. These are in place at a university level to ensure consistency in recruitment and ensure student performance.

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

Findings

The findings of the EEC for this section of the report were the following:

“Given the pandemic, we did not physically visit the premises, but we were given a virtual tour.

The support to the students as a process has been following the practices that the institution is used to rely on from its early days and is very centralised. There is a group of administrators that deal with course management and other groups of support and counselling staff that all work in a unit in the University centre.

The teaching staff is providing a lot of feedback to the students.

There is an ongoing and increasing engagement with learning methods that utilise development in technology.”

Strengths

The strengths identified by the EEC are listed below. We thank the EEC for the very positive comments relating to physical resources, the commitment of the university staff and the diversity of the student population.

“The physical evidence we were shown seemed of high standards and quality in terms of buildings, library and equipment.

The University and its staff seem to be looking for the development of the courses and the teaching methods constantly and considering ways that these changes will improve the delivery of the courses and the student experience.

In programmes like the MBA the student population is very diverse and this was very much complemented from people who graduated from this programme and entered in with a different profile.”

Areas of improvement and recommendations

“Considering whether there is over assessment, both formative and summative, and too close monitoring of the students and whether this is something that really helps the students become more responsible and independent learners.”

Please note that this comment has been addressed in Section 2.



6. Additional for distance learning programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A



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7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Addressed in a separate response by the PhD Program Coordinator.



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8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

N/A

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC made the following final remarks:

“Overall, we find that the programs evaluated were well-managed and that both students and teaching staff were committed to the learning process. We have pointed at some weaknesses of the current structuring in regard to ensuring that students become independent learners and in regard to ensuring the best possible utilization of teaching resources to achieving learning outcomes; this including a potential restructuring of programs to decrease the teaching loads.”

We would like to thank again the EEC for their positive comments and constructive recommendations. We were delighted that the report was, overall, very positive with high scores and favorable comments on all sections and categories and that the EEC commented particularly the quality and commitment of our teaching staff, the support offered to students and the fact that the various programmes focus on delivering content that is relevant to practice. The recommendations assisted us in reconsidering aspects of our programme with the view to improving it further. We are looking forward to the accreditation of our program so that we can continue to offer high quality service to our students.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Prof. Angelika Kokkinaki	Dean, School of Business	
Prof. Despo Ktoridou	Head, Department of Management	
Dr. Epaminondas Epaminonda	Program Coordinator	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: 30/3/2021

