

Doc. 300.2.2

# Institution Response (Institutional Evaluation)

Date: 05 February 2020

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
Mediterranean Institute of Management
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Institution Status:** Currently Operating

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

## A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.2.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the Institution in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, in the section building facilities, student welfare services, infrastructure, the HEI must respond on the comments and scoring of the EEC.*
- *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. 300.2.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

## **BUILDING FACILITIES - STUDENT WELFARE SERVICES - INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **1. Building facilities**

#### **1.1 Plans and licenses**

A topographical plan which displays in a clear manner the extent of the development and a general site plan which marks the building facilities, allocated parking spaces are re submitted with all the necessary official stamps.

It is noted that the MIM operates as a public Institution of Tertiary Education in a building owned by the government. Most public buildings in Cyprus operate without a license by the Local Authorities and the Public Works Department (PWD) is responsible for their maintenance and safety.

The appointed Civil Engineer proceeded with a Secondary Investigation/Inspection with consultation with PWD and submitted a duly signed Audit Certificate Form 104 (Appendix 9) accompanied by a report (Appendix 8) with an outline of the necessary works that need to be carried out in order to safeguard the building structural adequacy.

#### **1.2 Other facilities**

Satisfactory

### **2. Student welfare services**

The administration staff that supports the student welfare services appears to be adequate for the number of students enrolled. The Student Welfare Service of the Mediterranean Institute of Management (MIM) reports to the Administrative Services of the School and is staffed by two Officers and one secretary. The Student Welfare Service, through its Staff, serves as a communication channel between the students and the School's Management.

As stated, there are around 80-100 students for the 3 Master Programmes. Due to the fact that around 90% of the students are working full time jobs and most of them have families, they are generally not interested in student life such as student clubs, sports or any other entertaining activities.

#### **2.Recreation areas:**

The Institution has a small cafeteria, located on the ground floor, which can be used by student, staff and visitors daily. There is not a canteen where they can buy food and beverage, but there is a coffee machine and also vending machines. Outside the classrooms there is also a big kiosk with benches that students can use during their breaks. Students of MIM can also use for free, the sports centre at the University of Cyprus that is only 5 minutes away.

However, the Institution might consider creating more recreation areas for its students, which may include a pool table, ping pong table, a TV room or other games.

The Institution will presently install a TV in the cafeteria and meanwhile will consider the creation of additional recreation areas.

### 3. Policy and statutes for academic student support:

Due to the small number of students, instructors have direct contact with students offering them immediate academic support. Moreover, if students are facing a problem and do not want to discuss it with the instructor, they can discuss it with the student welfare officer and/or with the director of the Institution.

However, the Institution might consider having a responsible Academic Advisor for each student, who will provide them with all the necessary academic advice and guidance throughout their studies.

As stated in the Application for Institutional Evaluation (3. Policy and statutes for academic student support) with the commencement of each new Programme of Study, members of the academic staff are assigned a number of students for whom they will act as academic advisers throughout their studies. Students can contact their advisers and make an appointment in order to discuss the issues for which they require assistance and/or support.

External teaching staff of the MIM are available for meetings with students by appointment, at the Lecturers' Office (No.19) situated on the ground floor of the Cyprus Productivity central building.

### 3. Infrastructure

The library is satisfactory because students have access to the University of Cyprus library with their student card. The MIM is seeking additional library resource in the form of librarians.

The MIM has an appropriate educational platform.

MIM pays for external technical support at an appropriate level.

## 1. Institution's Academic Profile and Orientation

### Sub-Areas

- 1.1 Mission and strategic planning
- 1.2 Connecting with society
- 1.3 Development processes

### Findings

Well established public funded Institution with a strong reputation in Cyprus.

### Strengths

A small cohort size leads to a strong sense of student belonging and well-integrated community. The entrance exam is an effective way to recruit the very best student applicants.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

It is difficult to establish a clear pedagogical signature across the programmes delivered. This should be addressed by a system of appraisal and personal development for adjunct faculty. There is a need to strengthen the integration of research and teaching which could be achieved through the developmental training.

A well-structured system of appraisal is already in place. The appraisal methods, criteria and tools are regularly reviewed by the MIM Management and the Internal Quality Committee. Given that the majority of the faculty is composed of visiting lecturers, they receive training and developmental training at the institutions/universities they are employed on a permanent basis. However, MIM will introduce further developmental training based on the identified needs resulting from the evaluations and also from faculty own suggestions and recommendations following self-appraisal exercises.

MIM recognizes the need to strengthen the integration of research and teaching and it is constantly seeking ways to meet that need. During December 2019, MIM management communicated with all members of the Teaching Staff and asked them to introduce more recent research articles from scholarly journals to their courses and update accordingly section 14. "Recommended or Required Reading" of the Course Description Form (Appendix 4a and 4b). At the same time, they were advised to upload the research articles on the e-learning platform (Moodle) of the School. Additionally the Teaching Staff Evaluation Questionnaire (See Appendix 5) has been revised and it now includes three more criteria as regards research issues namely, the promotion of students' dissertations for publication in scientific journals, the submission of research proposals in affiliation with MIM and the introduction in lectures/notes of recent research articles from scholarly journals. The aforementioned criteria were used because they are more explicit and thus more befitting for the majority of MIM teaching staff being non-permanent staff.

The EEC examined marketing material and there is a need to improve it (e.g. module descriptions in the MBA prospectus are both dated and not fully reflective of the core content of some modules.)

The Programmes structure and curriculum content have been redesigned. Both the MBA and MPA programmes have 9 compulsory courses of a total of 60 ECTS, 4 elective courses of a total of 20 ECTS and a 30 ECTS compulsory dissertation.

Furthermore, more modern approaches have been introduced in order to make the Programmes less traditional. In particular, the course “Business Information Systems (5 ECTS)” was introduced as a compulsory course for the MBA programme and the course “e-government (5 ECTS)” for the MPA programme respectively. The course “General Management (5 ECTS)” changed to “Management Principles and International Business (7.5 ECTS)” for both the MBA and the MPA Programmes. The course “Business Analytics (5 ECTS)” has been introduced for both the MBA and the MPA Programmes. The courses “Organisation of the Republic of Cyprus” and “Public Administration in Cyprus/Organisation & Operation” have been integrated in the new MPA course “Principles, Structure and Operations of the Public Sector”.

Separate intended learning outcomes have been developed for the MBA and MPA programmes with specific reference to knowledge, skills and attitudes (see Appendices 1a & 1b).

The revised Programme structure and content are presented in Appendices 3a & 3b and the detailed description of each course can be seen in Appendices 4a & 4b. All changes introduced will be included in the new publications of the Programme Prospectuses.

## 2. Quality Assurance

### Sub-Areas

#### 2.1 System and quality assurance strategy

#### 2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study

### Findings

This is a small Institution where many of the decision and control processes are informal and rely on personal contacts. This system is generally effective.

### Strengths

Clear processes to ensure student feedback is responded to (both formal and informal). There is a very high response rate for the student feedback questionnaires.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

There is room for improvement in the informal nature of the programme reviews and there is a need to institute formal programme reviews on a regular basis.

In order to establish formal programme reviews on a regular basis the **Annual Programme Review (APR)** Process is introduced. The APR Process is included in the updated MIM Quality Assurance Policy (Appendix 2). According to **paragraph 4.4.3 Study Programmes of the MIM Quality Assurance Policy** “The revision of the Programmes of Study is carried out within the framework of the Annual Programme Review (APR). The APR is conducted with the involvement of staff, students and external stakeholders and aims to regularly monitor and improve the MIM Programmes of Study. The APR includes the analysis of the results of the evaluations completed by the students and the members of the teaching staff during the academic year. A critical analysis of the results is carried out by the Internal Quality Committee (IQC). A benchmarking exercise is also part of the APR process and aims to compare the MIM Programmes of Studies with other similar programmes (structure, content, duration, etc.) offered in Cyprus and abroad. Benchmarking helps to identify areas of improvement and good practices. The results of the evaluations and of the benchmarking are sent for views to the MIM Council and the final conclusions are used for the introduction of changes and the continuous development of the Institution Programmes. The contribution of external stakeholders is ensured with the involvement of the MIM Council members who advise on current issues that have arisen, based on their experience and the latest developments in the sectors /organisations they represent. It is noted that the Council has members from the Employer’s sector, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, the Ministry of Finance, the Human Resource Development Authority, the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development and also from two academic institutions based in Cyprus”.



### 3. Administration

#### Findings

The Institution has a collegiate system of decision making and this works effectively in ensuring quality delivery but is less effective in ensuring strategic review of curriculum.

Strategic Review of curriculum is ensured through the **Annual Programme Review (APR)** Process which is conducted with the involvement of staff, students and external stakeholders. The APR includes the analysis of the results of the evaluations completed by the students and the members of the teaching staff during the academic year. The APR also includes the benchmarking of the MIM Programmes of Studies with other similar programmes (structure, content, duration, etc.) offered in Cyprus and abroad. The results of the evaluations and of the benchmarking are sent for views to the MIM Council and the final conclusions are used for the introduction of changes and the continuous development of the School Programmes. The contribution of external stakeholders is ensured with the involvement of the MIM Council members who advise on current issues that have arisen, based on their experience and the latest developments in the sectors /organisations they represent.

#### Strengths

They have an active Council with a broad-based composition representing some very senior stakeholders.

This is a small Institution where decisions are widely discussed in an informal manner. There is a highly engaged and experienced administration staff.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

It was not clear to the EEC where legal responsibilities lie. The Internal Rules of Operation need to be clarified in this regard.

The MIM operates under the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC), a department of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. The MIM was established in 1976 and is the first business school in Cyprus. The Council of Ministers with the decision of July 10th 2013 (Decision Ref. 75.439) approved the MIM as a Public Institution of Tertiary Education under the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI), according to the Articles 1 to 13 of the Institutions of Higher Education Laws of 1996 to 2013.

The Director of the CPC is the Director of the MIM and is responsible for general administration as well as for finance issues. The MIM operates according to its Internal Rules of Operation which describes the administrative structure of the Institution and responsibilities of each function as well as the responsibilities of each Committee. Decisions are taken based on a Committee's conclusions and when necessary following consultation with the MIM Council which serves as an advisory body to the Director.

The EEC were impressed with the composition of the Council but felt they may wish to consider an environmental champion as a member of the Council.

The appointment of the MIM Council is approved by the Council of Ministers without a designated period of service for the members. Thus a member is replaced upon his/her own request or after taking into account the prevailing circumstances. Currently there is a vacancy in the Council and

efforts will be made to appoint a member who is passionate, interested and willing to lead the Institution in an environmentally responsible direction.

## 4. Learning and Teaching

### Sub-Areas

#### 4.1 Planning the programmes of study

#### 4.2 Organisation of teaching

### Findings

Teaching takes place in the evenings which is extremely taxing on students especially if they have four hours in a block on one subject. The timetabling is produced well in advance.

### Strengths

Adjunct faculty are given an opportunity to feedback to the institute formally through a questionnaire system.

There are clear criteria for entry to the programme.

There are professional relationships between staff and students.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The informal nature of module reviews leads to incremental improvement but does not provide a mechanism for a significant programme review. There is a need to formalise programme reviews and this should include benchmarking against a wide range of MBAs.

In order to establish formal programme reviews on a regular basis the **Annual Programme Review (APR)** Process is introduced. The APR includes benchmarking of the MIM Programmes of Study with other similar programmes (structure, content, duration, etc.) offered in Cyprus and abroad. Benchmarking helps to identify areas of improvement and good practices. The APR is conducted with the involvement of staff, students and external stakeholders and aims to regularly monitor and improve the MIM Programmes of Study. The APR includes the analysis of the results of the evaluations completed by the students and the members of the teaching staff during the academic year. A critical analysis of the results is carried out by the Internal Quality Committee (IQC). The results of the evaluations and of the benchmarking are sent for views to the MIM Council and the final conclusions are used for the introduction of changes and the continuous development of the MIM Programmes of Study. The contribution of external stakeholders is ensured with the involvement of the MIM Council members who advise on current issues that have arisen, based on their experience and the latest developments in the sectors /organisations they represent.

There is a concern that four-hour blocks of teaching on a single subject may be counterproductive in achieving learning outcomes and timetabling should be pedagogically justified.

As most courses are practical and thus may include exercises, case studies and presentations by the students, it is considered more appropriate to have four-hour lectures. The lecturers argue for the advantages of longer hour lectures. In addition, through the years, there was no reported evidence of negative feedback by the students concerning this issue.

Noted that during a four-hour lecture there is a 20 minutes break.

## 5. Teaching Staff

### Findings

This is a small Institution with two members of staff who do carry out some teaching activity but also have other responsibilities. The programmes delivered rely heavily on adjunct teachers with a mix of backgrounds.

### Strengths

The adjunct faculty engaged by MIM are appropriately qualified for MBA teaching. They have relevant practical experience which enriches the classroom experience.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The Institution is highly dependent on a restricted number of adjunct faculty, some of whom deliver three modules.

The Cyprus Productivity Center (CPC) has an open invitation for people interested to teach in CPC Programmes and/or MIM Programmes of Study. Applicants who qualify enter a list which is used to meet teaching staff needs whenever they may emerge. Therefore, even though the Institution chooses to cooperate with a certain number of faculty it is not highly dependent on a restricted number of adjunct faculty.

Based on the new revised Programme Structure and Curriculum content (see Appendices 3a and 3b) the majority of the faculty teaches one course with just a few members of the faculty teaching as many as two courses and never in the same term.

There is a need to diversify the staff base. This would reduce the exposure to risk and improve support for the research thesis.

As already explained the MIM management has access to a diversified staff base through the open invitation for teaching staff. As regards the exposure to risk, this is mitigated through the contracts (Appendix 7) signed with each member of the teaching staff.

The fact that the faculty has different educational backgrounds ensures that students receive appropriate support regardless of the subject they choose for their dissertation (research thesis). It is noted that, in addition to the adjunct faculty, members of the academic staff who work at the CPC/MIM also provide support for the research thesis.

There is also need to consider that broader teaching approaches including team teaching.

New and more effective teaching approaches remains one of MIM's main pursuit. Lecturers are encouraged to use teaching methods and techniques that are better suited to the needs and characteristics of the students attending the MIM Programmes of Study. The institution recognizes the fact that the majority of MIM students are individuals with valuable working experiences to share in class.

## 6. Research

### Findings

The Institution has only recently recognised the need to improve its research profile and has now a research policy and research committee. There will be a delay in the impact of these on the Institution. There is an urgent need for improvement in this area.

### Strengths

The Institution now has a research committee and a research policy. It is necessary to clarify the reporting relationship of this research committee and its accountabilities.

Research dissertations are well underpinned by research methods training and provide opportunities for ultimate publication.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

There is evidence that some taught modules do have research components but this is not uniform across the programmes. There is a need to develop pedagogical workshops to encourage greater research led teaching.

The MIM teaching staff is primarily composed of part time lecturers occupied in other institutions where they are actively involved in research activities as it can be seen in Forms 500.1.04 (Appendix 6).

Nevertheless, the MIM has organised a number of workshops on research related topics. Additionally, the MIM management has communicated with all members of the Teaching Staff and invited them to introduce more recent research articles from scholarly journals to their courses and update accordingly section 14. "Recommended or Required Reading" of the Course Description Form (Appendices 4a & 4b). They were advised to upload the research articles on the e-learning platform (Moodle) of the School.

The Teaching Staff Evaluation Questionnaire (See Appendix 5) has been revised and it now includes three more criteria as follows: (1) the promotion of students' dissertations for publication in scientific journals, (2) the submission of research proposals in affiliation with MIM and (3) the introduction in lectures/notes of recent research articles from scholarly journals. It was decided to use these criteria which are more explicit than a more general criteria about research activity because the majority of MIM teaching staff are not MIM permanent staff.

Research funding may be in line with other Cypriot institutes but is below international comparators. It will be difficult for an Institution comprised largely of adjunct faculty to overcome this. MIM needs to consider how it can collaborate more effectively with other Institutions.

In 2019 the MIM became member of Business Graduates Association (BGA – AMBA) <https://businessgraduatesassociation.com/> and is planning to explore collaborations with other Member Business schools in various fields including research.

Furthermore, the Erasmus Office continuously seeks ways to deploy already established agreements and at the same time to form new agreements. As already mentioned it is currently in

the process of signing an inter institutional agreement with the Aleksander Moisiu University Dures, Albania. It is also awaiting a response from the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB).

As regards publications of Research Dissertations it is worth mentioning that a number of students' research work has been published in scientific journals and in early 2020 one of them will be presented in an international conference.

Also a special edition for MIM students' outstanding dissertations of the past four academic years has been recently published by MIM. The publication has been uploaded on the Institution's website.

## 7. Resources

### Findings

This is a public organisation which manages its resources well fully compliant with government rules.

### Strengths

MIM is doing a good job on limited resources charging relatively low fees for an MBA.

The access to the University of Cyprus library and sports facilities through a student card system is a significant benefit to students.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The Institution provides access to restricted items of software and should secure additional funding particularly for research software e.g. qualitative research software

The Institution continuously works towards providing its stakeholders with all the resources they need, paying particular attention on research and teaching resources. For example in 2019 the Institution has invested in the updating of the e-learning platform (Moodle) and has introduced Urkund, a plagiarism detection software. Additionally, it has invested in the MIM Survey Platform which is used for online evaluations by students, teaching staff and the MIM management.

As regards a qualitative research software the MIM management has conducted a market research and will consider its purchase after assessing the interest that will be expressed from students for carrying out qualitative research. It is noted that until recently students, in majority, choose to do quantitative research. In the meantime, based on the new proposed Programme Structure, the course Research Methodology and Dissertation Writing increases from 5 ECTS to 7.5 ECTS in order to include more extensively the quantitative research topic.



## B. Conclusions and Final Remarks

MIM is a public organisation operating under and benefiting from Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.

The MIM successfully operates in a niche market. Its programmes are well established and widely recognised with a high level of student satisfaction. It is clear from student feedback that MIM provides value for money.

The Institute has a committed executive, administration and adjunct faculty.

The existence of a full research thesis is a key demonstration of masters level work.

The pedagogical approach is highly reliant on individual members of the teaching team.

There is need to ensure there is a consistent pedagogical signature and a stronger component of research led teaching. This can be achieved through more developmental workshops for all staff.

The MIM recognises the need for a stronger component of research led teaching and it has therefore undertaken specific actions towards that direction. For instance, the MIM management communicated with all members of the Teaching Staff and asked them to introduce more recent research articles from scholarly journals to their courses and update accordingly section 14. “Recommended or Required Reading” of the Course Description Form (Appendices 4a and 4b). They were advised to upload the research articles to the e-learning platform (Moodle) of the School.

The Teaching Staff Evaluation Questionnaire (See Appendix 5) has been revised and it now includes three research related criteria as follows: (1) the promotion of students’ dissertations for publication in scientific journals, (2) the submission of research proposals in affiliation with MIM, and (3) the introduction in lectures/notes of recent research articles from scholarly journals.

In addition to the above the MIM is working on the possibility of organizing additional developmental workshops for all of its staff. The workshops content will depend on the needs of the staff as they emerge from the evaluation results and the staff own suggestions.

The Institution has excellent relationships with its adjunct faculty but is highly reliant on a small number of people. There is a need to diversify this teaching base to reduce risk and improve the classroom experience.

As already explained MIM selects its faculty from a list produced following a structured procedure that includes an open invitation. This means that the MIM can at any time enrich its teaching staff base from that list. At the same time, it can attract visiting lectures from universities with which it has signed an Erasmus inter-institutional agreement. The Erasmus office in an effort to further connect internationally to well-established programmes it has contacted several universities and it is in the process of signing an inter institutional agreement with the Aleksander Moisiu University Durrës, Albania. It is also awaiting a response from the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB).

The Institution has signed a contract with its current adjunct faculty in order to ensure the quality of the services they provide. At the same time the contracts give MIM the ability to take corrective actions and if necessary replace a member of the faculty if he/she fails to fulfill his/her obligation(s) as described in the contract.

The curriculum of the masters programme offered would benefit from a benchmarking exercise to ensure latest developments are incorporated in the courses. In particular there is need to increase the international focus of the MBA programmes.

The MIM performed a benchmarking exercise in December 2019, with which it compared MIM Programmes of Study with about 10 similar programmes offered by institutions in Cyprus and abroad. The comparison led to very useful results and contributed to the preparation of the revised Programme Structure and curriculum content (see Appendices 3a and 3b) for both the MBA and MPA Programmes of Study. More modern approaches have been introduced with an emphasis on information and international management topics.

For example, the course “Business Information Systems” was introduced as a compulsory course and the course “General Management (5 ECTS)” changed to “Management Principles and International Business (7.5 ECTS)”.

The course “Business Analytics (5 ECTS)” has been introduced and has replaced the course “Quantitative Methods for Business” (4 ECTS).

Numerous other changes have been introduced and apply to a number of courses as can be seen in the detailed Programme structure and content (Appendices 3a and 3b).

In addition, the revised structure of the Programme has now 9 compulsory courses of a total of 60 ECTS and 6 elective courses from which students can choose 4 of a total of 20 ECTS. The Programme also includes a compulsory Dissertation of 30 ECTS.

The Institution is small and well run. It perhaps relies too heavily on informal decision making and there is a need to clarify reporting relationships and accountability of committees.

The role and responsibilities of all parties (MIM staff, teaching staff, committee members) are clarified primarily in the Internal Rules of Operation, for MIM staff they are detailed in their job descriptions and for faculty they are listed in their contracts. Teaching staff are handed along with their contract the “Teaching Staff Manual” which describes in detail all their duties and responsibilities and also guides them to do their job more efficiently and effectively.

This is an Institution appropriately focused on MBA and MPA teaching.

## D. Higher Education Institution Academic Representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Antonis Aniftos</b>	Acting Director	<input type="text"/>
<b>Kyprianos Nicolaides</b>	MIM Manager	<input type="text"/>
Fullname	Position	<input type="text"/>
Fullname	Position	<input type="text"/>
Fullname	Position	<input type="text"/>
Fullname	Position	<input type="text"/>

**Date:** 05 February 2020

