Doc. 300.3.2

Date: Date

Higher Education Institution's Response
(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  American University of Cyprus (AUCY)

- **Town:** Larnaca
- **School/Faculty: Faculty of Sciences and Technology**
- **Department: Department of Computer Sciences**
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
Programme 1- BSc in Computer Science, 4 Years, 240 ECTS

In Greek:
Πληροφορική
In English:
BSc in Computer Science

Programme 2 - BSc in Management Information Systems (MIS), 4 Years, 240 ECTS
In Greek:
Διοίκηση Πληροφοριακών Συστημάτων
In English:
BSc in Management Information Systems (MIS)

- **Department's Status: New**
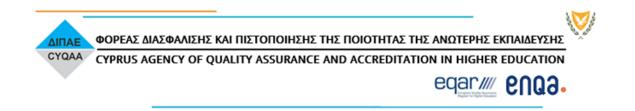
ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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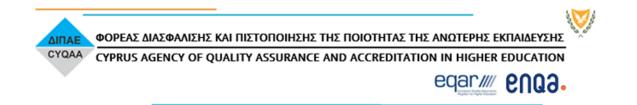CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on,<u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*
    - *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. 300.3.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

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

☐ Identify key factors that impact the departments rankings and prioritize strategies to improve them.

☐ Develop a concise set of indicators that can be used for assessing the faculty performance recognizing fundamental differences among all cured disciplines.

☐ The continuous training and evaluation of academic staff is considered necessary for the establishment of AUCY's quality performance, which should be recorded and constantly monitored on a yearly basis.

☐ The department should acknowledge and provide the necessary resources for the provision of academic services that assist the satisfaction of top-quality assurance requirements.

☐ AUCY's website needs to be the most effective tool for communication and guidance for internal and external stakeholders on both its academic and quality assurance activities. AUCY must ensure that all programmes of study have distinct websites with updated academic and research information with corresponding accreditation information.

☐ AUCY needs to establish a comprehensive and well-structured self-assessment mechanism focusing on the impact, quality and ranking of its academic staff.

☐ Introduction of new goals for AUCY's academic staff should be clear, transparent and periodically updated for all staff rankings. The research input and output of the faculty need to be evaluated periodically by implementing internationally established best practices.

☐ Funding allocation and motivation of academic staff should be based on non-subjective information collected through a corresponding data management system. Detect all data items that are prone to accuracy and reliability errors and provide efficient support for enhancement and crosscheck of accuracy and reliability.

☐ Work has to be done in order for external to AUCY stakeholders to be enthusiastic and eager to be involved with AUCY. Develop a well-documented external stakeholder engagement process.

☐ Student involvement should be sought after within the quality assurance process. Develop a meaningful student engagement process focusing on the campus/student life over and above classroom activities and teaching evaluations and enforce it from day one of operations.

☐ Suitable quality indexes based on established international procedures need to be developed in order to asses both education and research.

N/A there are no students. As stated by the EEC in p15, Questions about operations cannot be answered because the department/university does not operate.

However, a complete answer is in the **Conclusions and final remarks** section.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

2.1 System and quality assurance strategy
2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

- Concentration of tasks on the head of department. The EEC recommends a more collegial approach to quality assurance.
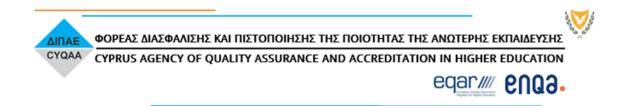- Dealing with plagiarism is under the responsibility of faculty members. The EEC strongly recommends that this responsibility lies with the dean and executive management instead.

N/A there are no students. As stated by the EEC in p15, **Questions about operations cannot be answered because the department/university does not operate.**

It is not part of our intention to burden the Head with extra responsibilities. The Head will follow the academic path we have agreed upon his hiring. His skills will also be developed through the FDC. Various committees and senior members at the ranks of Associate Professors and Professors will be initially more responsible for stabilizing the committees and all issues related to the smooth operation of the Department of Computer Sciences. Program coordinators exist that will reduce the burden of the Head. Tutors will be assigned for each student that will mentor them through their university life. All of our members of staff are research oriented and we will make sure that provisions are made to each one of them so they can continue their research at a world class pace.

We agree plagiarism and academic misconduct will be dealt by the Dean.

A complete answer is in the **Conclusions and final remarks** section.

3. Administration

- Concentration of tasks on the head of department. The EEC recommends a more collegial approach to department management.
- Dealing with academic misconduct is under the responsibility of faculty members. The EEC strongly recommends that this responsibility lies with the dean and executive management instead.

As stated by the EEC in p15, **Questions about operations cannot be answered because the department/university does not operate.**

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We agree academic misconduct will be dealt by the Dean.

A complete answer is in the **Conclusions and final remarks** section.
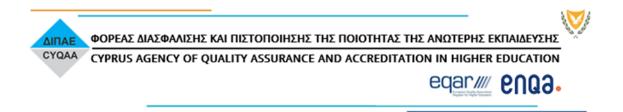
4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study
4.2 Organisation of teaching

Some of the work that would naturally fall under the remit of an educational committee, needs to be done before the beginning of the academic year. It is not clear to us whether the current work of the founding members of the Department, in preparation for the first student intake, would benefit from the early creation of such a committee; it is a matter to be considered.

The EEC recommends the creation of a mechanism dedicated exclusively to the flow of information between student representatives and staff. Such a process could take the form of a staff/student consultative committee, or any other form deemed appropriate. The aim should be to facilitate discussion and flow of information under a student-driven agenda. Any contribution of the student representatives to the Departmental Council meetings, under its more general agenda, should be valued, but due to lack of experience or confidence, it would often be limited.

We totally agree. We rely on student feedback. We need to supply excellent services to the students. Mentor schemes will be available in September. All committees will be progressively be formed. Yes, they are not needed now and the Head has no burden at the moment. Our RESEARCH partners advised us to further adjust our two programs to better suit the employability of our future students with them. We are in contact almost every day with our stakeholders regarding research and industrial projects.

A complete answer is in the **Conclusions and final remarks** section.

5. Teaching Staff

While the department's commitment to the professional development of the staff was evident, currently there are no concrete plans on how this can be organized. The EEC recommends, at some later stage, the creation of a departmental professional development plan, which will supplement the existing Faculty one.

> We totally agree. We have already set up a Research Unit, an Artificial Intelligence Unit and the Faculty Development Unit. A complete answer is in the **Conclusions and final remarks** section.

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6. Research

☐ Motivation and benefits - both financial and academic in nature - should be available to all faculty members to seek national, European or worldwide private or governmental research funds.
☐ A specific motivation in terms of a student grant or travel reward should be established in order to engage students into research activities.
☐ A clear policy on EU-funding schemes should also be introduced, since it aids to the respectability of both the faculty and the department, i.e., by seeking specific prestigious research funding targets per year, like ERC grants.

All three questions have been answered in the **Conclusions and final remarks** section.

Regarding this comment
The research aspect of the department is heavily overlooked and requires significant amounts of efforts by AUCY people to become up-to-date and at the same level as other departments in Cyprus and abroad. Good practices from other well-known and esteemed institutions should be integrated with respect to academic staff peer-reviewed research publications production, and several policies need to be established prior to the department's opening, so as to ensure a decent research orientation of the department.

N/A
there are no students enrolled, there is no department, and no courses have been accredited yet. Nevertheless, we are active with planning research proposals and synchronized with our world class research partners.

regarding this comment in p24, is totally in contrast with the excellent comments in the evaluation report of the programs. We are considering to hire over 35 world class researchers as they appear in our files and as you interviewed them during the accreditation day. We are collaborating with Airbus on the production of future aircrafts that rely on state-of-the-art solutions in Artificial Intelligence. That is something that no other University in Cyprus has ever been invited to, to the best of my recollection. We are already working on software engineering and artificial intelligence applications with the Hellenic Police and the Hellenic Air Force. No other University in Cyprus had this privilege, to the best of my recollection. We are developing space computing solutions for upcoming space missions. No other University had this privilege in Cyprus to the best of my recollection. We are already collaborating with the Royal Navy and the University of Plymouth in the UK on software engineering solutions for the Navy. We are collaborating with Demokritos NCSR in Athens, Greece's biggest public research center.

We have a research unit while there is no department or accredited courses. We have established an Artificial Intelligence Unit for dealing with all of our AI needs at University level. And the list is endless as the qualifications of our personnel are. Their CVs have been submitted to you. **The department is strictly research oriented** and this was admitted by all members of the EEC during the accreditation day and from the comments of the programmatic report.

7. Resources

☐ Foresee specific numbers/limits with respect to the annual budget modifications based on specific financial or other types of measurable criteria.

☐ The number of per year enrolled students should not affect/define the number of faculty positions on a per year basis; faculty members should be involved with longer than a single academic year contracts, so as to ensure stability and strengthen the sense of academic team building under the same AUCY affiliation.

☐ Provide a feasibility study including an assessment of the practicality of the proposed financing plan.

☐ Provide risk assessment scenarios and propose solutions based on the worst case scenarios, especially with respect to student enrollments and securing of external funding resources.

All four questions have been answered in the last part of the **Conclusions and final remarks** section.

Regarding this comment in p. 25
The Department carries out an assessment of the risks and sustainability of the programmes of study and adequately provides feedback on their operation.

The department will operate with a minimum of 8 students and above.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

☐ **Identify key factors that impact the departments rankings and prioritize strategies to improve them.**

Academic reputation is essential for AUCY. Quality students will be attracted when AUCY becomes an established University of accomplished academic reputation. It is the most important factor that constitutes towards a student's decision on their next study destination. According to our long term strategy for 2050 here are the top factors that will constantly be improving our Faculty's and Department's academic reputation:

1. We are preparing big project research proposals

Research is crucial for AUCY in order to improve its reputation. We have worked out the prospectives perceived as our strengths and weaknesses. Based on these insights, we are refining our brand message in order to differentiate from our competitors. To be a reputable institution in every field and have no flaws is impossible, so we channel our unique qualities and niche areas through extensive research, big funding and utilization of key personnel and research skills. A research unit with national and international directives was established some time ago. We are working on three main proposals with budget in the range of 500,000 euro to be obtained before the end of 2021. With our research partners we have established a research plan until 2050 related to Defense and Security projects for Cyprus and Greece.
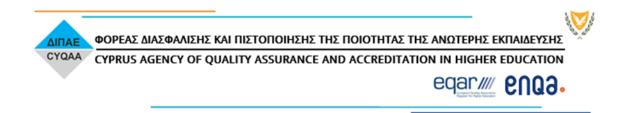
2. We will listen to our students

In Fall 2021 and afterwards we will be sampling the students' opinion through all possible means. It is important for us to process the student opinion in order to gradually improve our reputation. We will be performing surveys at all possible instances. We will be asking plentiful questions that offer a wealth of useful data. It would help to have respondents rate other institutions they are considering on the same attributes for a meta-analysis. The repeat functionality of surveys represent an easy and efficient way to gather student opinion and facilitate the improvement of AUCY's reputation.

3. We will maintain an adaptable brand strategy

We will prioritize student experience and academic offerings. We want to fulfill a higher educational 'brand promise'. Our aim is to a highly competitive world class University. Our curricula is constantly being updated to reflect the changing marketplace and dynamics in higher education. The updated files of the applications of our two programs have been submitted to you. We are considering the growing impact of globalization. Not only has this brought about new academic subjects but AUCY must accommodates for nontraditional students and an older student population. In order to strengthen brand positioning and reputation, AUCY is everyday attempting to successfully manage these changes.

4. Engagement

Our brand strategy also includes improving our engagement levels. Creating a sense of belonging is vital for students. We try to operate internally as a family and we are happy to accept in this family our first students in September. We understand that satisfaction with the undergraduate experience is the single most essential pre-condition for AUCY's success. In the future those

students who are not satisfied are, without exception, non-donors. Students willing to donate would hold AUCY in high accord. Students will come to AUCY to improve on particular skills and, essentially, boost their employer reputation. We will make sure by September that they will have the assurance they need that AUCY they chose can prepare them for this. Hopefully, through research, hiring the best professors available in the market and performing all other related activities we will improve our academic reputation that will be a determining factor for students to choose AUCY for preparing their future careers.

☐ **Develop a concise set of indicators that can be used for assessing the faculty performance recognizing fundamental differences among all cured disciplines.**
☐ **The continuous training and evaluation of academic staff is considered necessary for the establishment of AUCY's quality performance, which should be recorded and constantly monitored on a yearly basis.**
☐ **The department should acknowledge and provide the necessary resources for the provision of academic services that assist the satisfaction of top-quality assurance requirements.**

As we have already been advised by the EEC the above three comments have been answered by establishing a **Faculty Development Center.**

During the interviews we had with all the candidates (>300) and more importantly with the ones we decided to sign MOUs and proceed with their employment, we have agreed with each particular members a path to be followed within the next three years. Each member of staff will be closely monitored, mentored, participate in all University activities, and, conduct teaching and research activities. All members have been initially ranked at University level by clear procedures open to all candidates for discussion. We have agreed with each particular member the areas that need to be developed either personally or with our assistance. We agree with the EEC that a more formal way needs to be created for faculty development purposes and, thus, we have already initiated a basic planning that will be heavily expanded as the beginning of the Fall 2021 is approaching.
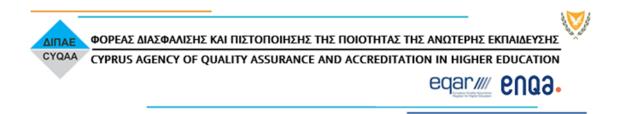
Therefore, the **Faculty Development Center** to be developed is reaffirming the University's commitment to support and promote faculty development, initially on teaching techniques.
In pursuit of this goal, AUCY will:
- Formalize and document the regulations and practices related to the teaching and research activities expected by each faculty member individually.
- Introduce a Faculty Ranking System, according to the individual performances
- Adjust the teaching Load, according to faculty ranking
- Organized various talks and seminars related to faculty development and improvement of the teaching methodologies suitable for teaching to Computer Science students
Provides funding for faculty members to continue their professional development through: a) leave of absence for research, b) additional graduate work in each faculty's field, c) attendance of professional meetings, and d) in-service training.

Recruitment

Recruitment is based on the vacancy's requirements. For all academic positions, applicants must be holders of a doctoral degree from recognized universities in Cyprus or abroad. Furthermore, research work, teaching experience are mandatory. The recruitment process is carried out after

a thorough evaluation of the CVs of each candidate member by the Hiring Committee and the leading Chair. The Department is voting for the candidates to be further invited for a formal interview. The process of development of members of the academic staff is achieved by evaluating their teaching and research performance over a set period of time.

Career Advancement Planning for academic staff

Promotion for faculty members at AUCY is based on specified competencies, qualifications, experience and other relevant factors. A major requirement for promotion from one rank to another is teaching quality, research, service to the Community, continuous commitment and dedication to the AUCY. Upon employment every faculty member goes through a number of evaluations which influence the promotion.

Promotion Criteria

Advancement in faculty rank depends on the following criteria:
- Fulfillment of the minimal criteria for appointment to rank.
- Evidence of high competency in teaching.
- Evidence of positive contributions to the overall development of the individual's program area within the Department.
- Evidence of service to the AUCY and Community in general.
- Membership and participation in professional national and international societies.
- Research and scholar publications or recognized creative work in the individual's field of research.

Necessary documentation for Promotion

To be considered for advancement in rank, the faculty member will be evaluated based on the following:
- Peer to Peer evaluation review
- Faculty Presentation review
- Head of program of studies review
- Student Evaluations
- Evidence of research and scholar publications in peer reviewed journals
- Evidence service to the AUCY and Community in general
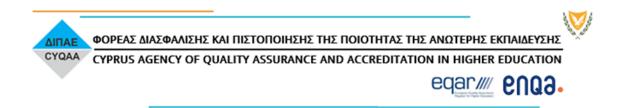- Evidence of membership and participation in professional societies

This proposal has been submitted to the University Council for further consideration.

Faculty Development Center Statement

1. Purpose of the center

This policy outlines the commitment of AUCY to faculty development and identifies the principles and mechanisms by which the Faculty Development Policy is implemented and reviewed.

2. Introduction

Faculty development will include the personal and professional development that enables individuals and groups to achieve their full potential and contribute to the provision of excellent teaching and develop research at AUCY.

The Faculty Development Committee will be responsible for disseminating policy and procedures for faculty development and for monitoring the effectiveness of faculty development policy and procedures, and for their on-going modification and improvement. Faculty development activities are vital to the quality assurance of teaching, research and administration.

3. Faculty development principles

Faculty development can be defined as any activity which enhances faculty skills, knowledge, competences or working practices and may include (but is not limited to):

- Program development
- Attendance and contributions at national and international conferences, meetings and symposia
- Vocational training (internal or external)
- Faculty development activities structured by AUCY or their partners
- Curriculum development and enhancement
- Active involvement with professional bodies
- Active involvement in national and international research teams
- Application for professional recognition of Academies and other professional bodies
- Supervision of research candidates
- External Examination
- Participation in internal or external validation, approval or review events

4. Equality statement

There will be equality of access to faculty development opportunities for all AUCY faculty without prejudice to gender or sexual orientation, race, ethic or national background, marital or parental status, disability, religion, or age.

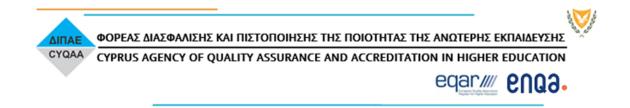## 5. Roles and Responsibilities – The Faculty Development Committee

The Faculty Development Committee consists of the following:

- Dean of the School
- Research Coordinator
- Program Coordinators
- Director of Academic Affairs : Vice – President
- Head of the Department

The Faculty Development Committee will responsible for the development, revision and implementation of the faculty development policy.

The Faculty Development Committee will be responsible for:

- developing partnerships with relevant bodies and sections, both internal and external to the AUCY (e.g. Health &Safety)
- communicating information regarding faculty development opportunities
- contributing to and implementing the faculty development elements of current AUCY Policies

- reporting on and monitoring faculty development activity
- assessing the quality of AUCY faculty Development

6. Roles and Responsibilities – Individuals

Current and new faculty may identify their own needs for training and faculty development as their roles and responsibilities change over time and as they reflect on their current practice. Faculty development needs may also be identified through other ways – for examples: skills and research audits, peer review and peer observation feedback, through the regular program of faculty appraisal, from student feedback or through feedback from external reviewers, valuators or professional bodies.

Individual members of faculty of AUCY will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own professional and career development. All will invited to take advantage of centrally-provided opportunities for faculty development, according to the demands of their particular role.

7. Quality Assurance

The Faculty Development Committee will evaluate faculty development provision by verbal feedback, questionnaire, feedback from others and self-assessment, and will review practice within the Committee.
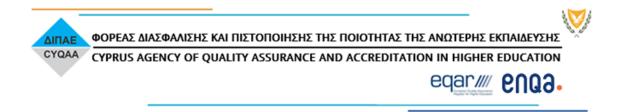
8. Resourcing the faculty development policy

The faculty development policy will be resourced through a variety of sources and incentives. There is a central contribution from AUCY to support the generic faculty development program which provides a limited amount of funding for any external suppliers of faculty training.

AUCY will also undertake (wherever reasonably practicable) to accommodate members of faculty who are attending conferences and symposia where that member of faculty is giving a paper or poster that is expected to lead to a significant publication that will include the affiliation of AUCY. All applications for such support must be made through the Faculty Development Committee in advance of attending conferences.

☐ **AUCY's website needs to be the most effective tool for communication and guidance for internal and external stakeholders on both its academic and quality assurance activities. AUCY must ensure that all programs of study have distinct websites with updated academic and research information with corresponding accreditation information.**

We totally agree. After the accreditation we will update our website, according to the law and with no further restrictions. Cypriot law restrictions apply for institutes that haven't passed an accreditation.

☐ **AUCY needs to establish a comprehensive and well-structured self-assessment mechanism focusing on the impact, quality and ranking of its academic staff.**
☐ **Introduction of new goals for AUCY's academic staff should be clear, transparent and periodically updated for all staff rankings. The research input and output of the faculty need to be evaluated periodically by implementing internationally established best practices.**

Please, read the section above related to the establishment of the **Faculty Development Center**. Both these two comments have been answered already in that section.

☐ **Funding allocation and motivation of academic staff should be based on non-subjective information collected though a corresponding data management system. Detect all data items that are prone to accuracy and reliability errors and provide efficient support for enhancement and crosscheck of accuracy and reliability.**
☐ **Motivation and benefits - both financial and academic in nature - should be available to all faculty members to seek national, European or worldwide private or governmental research funds.**
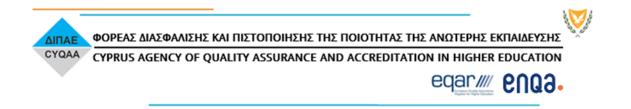
Motivation is relevant for each academic staff. All members of staff have been informed about the Research Center for National and International research, the Faculty Development Center and the Artificial Intelligence Unit. All members have been welcomed to prepare research project proposals. Some of them have agreed. We are currently preparing three research proposals with Airbus on Artificial Intelligence for an initial funding in the range of 500,000 euro. A long term strategy has been defined based on the successful collaboration between us. We are preparing another project with the Hellenic Air Force. We have other candidate projects with the Cypriot Government. We are following standard procedures that are being followed by other Universities. It is only fair to allocate funding based on the contribution of each member of the academic staff, assuming they are willing to participate in research projects.

Data management is an essential area of responsible research. Effective data management can increase the pace of the research process, contribute to the soundness of research results, and meet funding agency requirements by making research data easy to manage and share over the long term. We create a plan for managing data at the beginning of a project. The principal investigator and the research teams save time and effort later on and ensure data produced will be preserved in a clear, useable format. The Research Data Management System we are aiming in using at AUCY strives to provide the Faculty with a comprehensive research data management solution. It manages and collects data from multiple data streams including instrument, processed data, metadata ("Data about Data") and notes. It provides a complete and lasting record of discovery. It delivers local/remote easy, safe and secure access to data. It reduce loss of lab expertise when students and staff will be leaving by providing a repository of information for others to access. It create forums to collaborate, query, comment, re-think and interpret results. Protecting Intellectual Property is our main concern at AUCY, including knowhow and new technologies.

☐ **Work has to be done in order for external to AUCY stakeholders to be enthusiastic and eager to be involved with AUCY. Develop a well-documented external stakeholder engagement process.**

Engaging with stakeholders is crucial to the success of AUCY. To succeed, AUCY must have a clear vision derived from a robust strategic planning process, and an effective strategic plan or marketing plan can only come from stakeholder engagement.

At Faculty level and based on the previous comments, our team works with organizations with a diverse range of stakeholders. Key stakeholder opinions and insights are incredibly valuable in the early stages of the planning and development processes. Robust communication adds insight into the University, the industries, trends, needs and growth opportunities, as well as to a vision of the

AUCY's future. Based on our partners and assuming the good collaborations will continue the Faculty has a guaranteed life until 2050.

Effective engagement helps translate stakeholder needs into AUCY goals and creates the basis of effective strategy development. Discovering the point of consensus or shared motivation helps a group of stakeholders to arrive at a decision and ensures an investment in a meaningful outcome. Indeed, without internal alignment we cannot build an effective strategy or implement change. We listen to our stakeholders and we have also adapted the two programs that are under accreditation to their needs up in the year of 2050. We will continue in the same manner with our courses and future departments.

Stakeholders can differ depending on the business or organization. Ours include employees, shareholders, regulatory or government agencies, boards of directors, and Deans, Rectors and University owners. Each has a unique perspective about what it will take for AUCY to succeed. For example, internal stakeholders, like professors, know the strengths and weaknesses of AUCY from the ground up, and have first-hand knowledge of what it takes to deliver research work. External stakeholders will have a different, but equally valuable, perspective about how AUCY and its operations impact them.

A shared understanding is essential to building a cohesive vision for the future. We bring value to the strategic and marketing planning process by implementing an active consultation and engagement process and providing an open forum for discussion and debate. We help to align, impartially and objectively, an external organization around a common vision with AUCY and make recommendations on how the future ambition can be best achieved.

How do we engage stakeholders?
In our experience, to build and support ongoing engagement in the strategic and marketing planning and implementation processes, we implement three important things :
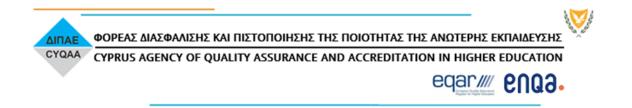
1. Clear, consistent communication

For a project to be successful all parties need to have a clear understanding of the process and the objectives. Information needs to be shared in a purposeful and consistent way throughout each stage of the project. AUCY and external stakeholders need to understand the vision and the part they individually play in meeting the organization's goals.

2. We outline the engagement required from stakeholders.

We map out the process along with key milestones where stakeholder engagement will be needed and why it is valuable. We arrange a series of interactive engagements where stakeholders are included in discussions and debates. Greater understanding leads to greater ownership so we consistently reinforce shared ideas and common goals, and we give feedback throughout the process.

3. We build the project around the engagement

Projects can fail to live up to their potential because the stakeholder engagement was not recognized as an integral part of the process. Stakeholder engagement, from the outset, helps build involvement and a sense of continuation to a new future. We allow adequate time and planning to include all relevant parties and to allow them to discuss, understand and internalize each project milestone or

step in the process. If the stakeholders do not understand the plan, they will have a difficult time remaining engaged and they will be oving in the desired direction later.

The benefits of stakeholder engagement

- It offers those who will affect or be affected by the outcomes a chance to voice their opinions
- It ensures that AUCY has greater clarity and a shared vision amongst its key influencers
- It enables AUCY to identify who their key stakeholders are and understand the relationship they have with us or other organizations.
- It brings people together to pool knowledge, experience, and expertise to co-create solutions
- It builds collaborative partnerships and new relationships that generate value
- It identifies strategies to gain competitive advantage
- It reduces the level of risk within AUCY and improves governance

AUCY has been very active in engaging stakeholders and preparing research proposals within 2021.

☐ **A specific motivation in terms of a student grant or travel reward should be established in order to engage students into research activities.**

N/A as we don't have students. For sure students will be participate in research activities. Both student grants and travel rewards will generously be allocated to our students.

☐ **A clear policy on EU-funding schemes should also be introduced, since it aids to the respectability of both the faculty and the department, i.e., by seeking specific prestigious research funding targets per year, like ERC grants.**

As already discussed with the EEC this policy will be developed by the **Faculty Development Center.** The EEC has recommended to us to ask two ERC proposals per year by each faculty member. We totally agree on this. Our initial suggestion was to request two prestigious publications per year per faculty member. The EEC correctly said that this is not enough. Two ERC proposals at least is a better sign that our faculty members are active and that they are hard workers. From the Faculty's side we provide at least three mechanisms for our faculty members to come forward and present their ideas. From our side and within the **Faculty Development Center** we will be informing our personnel about all possible funding sources for EU funding. Probably, Dr Stavros Katsaronas will be doing this as he is our Strategic Project Manager and very active with attracting project funding.

☐ **Student involvement should be sought after within the quality assurance process. Develop a meaningful student engagement process focusing on the campus/student life over and above classroom activities and teaching evaluations and enforce it from day one of operations.**

N/A
Yes, it will be applied when we will have the students. These are standard procedures followed by all Universities.

However, the evaluation criteria of students consists of the following:
- Examinations

- Assignments/projects
- Labs Assignments

(see each module for the percentage analysis).

By the end of each semester (Fall and Spring), the following grading system is used for all programs of study:
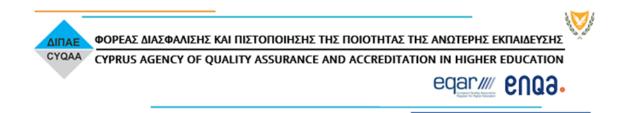
The grading scale is the following :

GRADE	GPA	PERSENTILE
A	4.00	95-100
A-	3.70	92-94
B+	3.30	88-91
B	3.00	85-87
B-	2.70	82-84
C+	2.30	78-81
C	2.00	75-77
C-	1.70	72-74
D+	1.30	68-71
D	1.00	65-67
F	0.00	
IF	0.000 (incomplete failure calculates as an F for students without graduate standing until final grade is received)	
INC	0.000 (incomplete calculates as an F for students without graduate standing until final grade is received)	

AUCY aims to cultivate a high-quality student-centered environment by maintaining a living and learning environment that will attract and challenge outstanding students. To this end, the AUCY considers that educational communication is an extremely important element in higher education and helps students further develop their skills, knowledge and competencies. Therefore, AUCY reinforces the idea of an open door policy between the student and the teacher.

Feedback from the Teaching Personnel: AUCY considers that creating a culture of constructive feedback enhances the student learning experience. All Faculty members at the AUCY are required to offer a timely, formal or informal feedback to their students regarding their assessments. This involves a clear explanation of what they could have done to achieve a higher mark and pointing out the challenges they faced. Additionally, all teaching personnel are required to communicate the marking criteria for the courses they teach, and provide clear instructions on their assessments to help students better prepare.

Feedback from the Students: AUCY equally considers that constructive feedback should also come from the students towards their teachers, the AUCY and module/unit content. To this end, AUCY implements the student survey questionnaires during every academic semester for all modules/units and program. This give teachers and administrators important information about

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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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which parts of a module/unit or program are working well and which are not. Student feedback also gives more context to the teaching evaluation further to the peer review. Student feedback can enhance and help understand the teaching and learning culture of the AUCY, help the program coordinators and teachers plan next year's curriculum/module content (and see whether there is a need for changes) or rethink the class structure. Additionally, students can provide formal and informal feedback (using the suggestion box anonymously) about the workload, pace and structure of each of their classes. Students can also comment about the AUCY learning environment such as classroom culture and physical resources. The student survey is analyzed electronically and the results are presented to the faculty at the end of the academic semester.

Complaints

Students who feel that the AUCY has not delivered the standard of service, which it would be reasonable to expect, may be entitled to lodge a complaint. The Complaints Procedure should be used for serious matters, and not for minor things such as occasional lapses of good manners or disputes of a private nature between staff and learners. Complaints can be lodged by students, prospective students and members of the general public, but cannot be made by a third party.

Separate procedures exist for the following, which therefore cannot form the substance of a complaint:
- Appeals against the decisions of Assessment Boards;
- Complaints against the Student's Welfare/Union;
- Appeals against decisions taken under disciplinary proceedings;
- Complaints about businesses operating on the AUCY premises, but not owned by the AUCY;
- Complaints relating to personal harassment or discrimination on sexual, religious, racial or other grounds.

The procedure has three possible stages:
- Complaint raised informally with the staff concerned at the local level (Stage1)
- Complaint to Program Coordinator or other line manager (Stage2)
- Appeal to a Complaints Review Panel (Stage3)

Every reasonable effort should be made to raise the complaint informally. If no satisfactory outcome is reached, students can lodge a formal complaint with the Director of Academic Affairs. Students are also advised at this point to discuss the matter with a member of the Student's Union team.

A complaint must normally be lodged within two calendar months of the incident that gave rise to the complaint; this ensures that the people involved still remember the case, and the facts can be established.

☐ **Suitable quality indexes based on established international procedures need to be developed in order to asses both education and research.**

Two important sets of performance indicators will become established in AUCY. These are the research quality ratings and teaching quality ratings. The research quality ratings and, to a lesser extent, the teaching quality ratings, influence the level of funding that may be provided to higher education institutions. The correlation between the two ratings and the possible consequences of policies that reshape the higher education sector by concentrating research resources in a limited number of institutions is a situation that has also been witnessed in Cyprus. AUCY needs to conform with these logical quality indexes in order to be established as a reputable University both
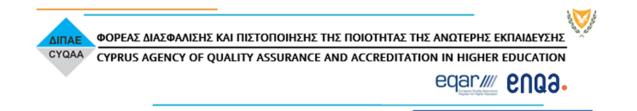
nationally in Cyprus and internationally as a world-class state-of-the-art institution for both teaching and research. Comparisons can be made between quality assurance / assessment approaches for the Cypriot higher educational system and systems in other countries, such as our partners in USA.

In teaching and learning the most commonly used indexes are included in the usage of quality assurance, quality control, quality audit and quality assessment. The AUCY quality assurance encompasses all the policies, system s and processes directed toward ensuring the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning. Under this general umbrella, quality control relates to the arrangements (procedures, standards and organization) within AUCY that verify teaching and assessment are carried out in a satisfactory manner. These would normally include the external examiner system.

Internal quality audit is desired and is being performed regularly to the two courses for example. This technique ensures that the quality control arrangements in AUCY are satisfactory in all aspects of the desired investigation. In practice, the prime responsibility for quality audit lies individually or collectively with AUCY. It extends to the totality of quality assurance and may include staff development and curriculum design, as it has been the case over the last couple of months. External quality control is the healthiest thing that could happen to any University. Quality assessment is the process of external evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Quality assessment will be performed internally by the Faculty Development Centre and occasionally during EEC visits. Another long term role of the FDC unit will be to scrutiny the available Faculty documentation, student work, direct observation, interview, and by reference to performance indicators, such as completion rates. All these parameters can be quantified and provide a measure of the particular indexes, amongst others. A significant number of assessment ratings will be produced in time. All aspects of the teaching and learning indexes can be monitored. Although an accreditation process may require an institutional self-study and exhaustive peer reviewing this will not lead to a ranking of a university or program. General rankings for Universities are based on the evaluation of institutionally reported data and the application of ranking criteria designed by the organization which performs the ranking.

Student academic achievement is an important index and a vital tool for both the improvement of both programs that may occur during the summer of 2022. AUCY will perform the assessment of student outcomes and it is expected that these results will enhance quality. Quantifying both inputs and outputs of the various quality internal assessments by using appropriate indexes is significant for the control and assessment of any parameter related to teaching and learning at AUCY. General aspects to be considered for modelling are aims and curricula, curriculum design and review, the teaching and learning environment, staff resources, learning resources, course organization, teaching and learning practice, student support, assessment and monitoring, students' work, output, outcomes and quality control. The FDC can rank each of these sample indexes and extract valuable conclusions regarding the operation of the upcoming University. Other indexes may hide behind factors such as mission, authorization, governance, faculty, educational programs, finances and public information. These rankings may be subjective regarding their effectiveness in evaluating a University, but they may influence the public opinion and student choice.

Research quality consists certainly of a more prestigious sets of indexes that are related to the reputation of a University. If a set of research indexes are formed and compared amongst the

various Universities it will be clear why the winning organization is also the collector of most of the governmental funding in every country. Such comparison directly shows the quality of the Universities especially in a small country like Cyprus. Reputation ratings is something that concerns AUCY. However, the current accreditation needs to be completed first before we focus on such analysis. Yes, we write research proposal to get excellent international funding, but that is something that we will focus on after this accreditation. We envision AUCY as an upcoming centre of excellence for at least the pursue of scientific studies, which is the area of concentration of the writer.

Significant indexes to be monitored include the numbers of articles in academic journals, total external research income, postgraduate research students, short works, and books. The influence of the various indexes that may be modelled differs by specialization and subject area. Comparing indexes for a program, faculty, students and doctoral graduates that include citation measures, data on research publications, faculty honours awards, enrolments and graduates, along with indexes related to the doctoral recipients yields to interesting results. The analysis of these data permit the correlation of program quality with other program indexes. **Please, bear in mind that the top-rated programs in most fields tend to have more faculty and more graduate students than the lower-rated programs.** Therefore, faculties with more students are likely to get better ranking. Also the amounts of funding are increased. Yes, the quest for quality students remains an issue, but higher number guarantee the financial stability of an institution, more professors to be hired, more publications, more citations better reputation for the university by attracting more high salary professors. They say, you will get a better head of department if you pay high. In a university with small amounts of students we all know that high salaries are not feasible. All this analysis regarding the numbers of students and the like hood of getting higher rankings based on the nature of commonly used indexes is something that has been scientifically proved and published.

Assuming that the research quality and teaching quality indexes are valid indicators of quality in their respective areas, it is then of interest to examine the relationship between them. We can extract useful results at the subject level. Overall, any parameter within the Faculty can be expressed as an index, modelled, analyzed and compared against any other index. This type of analysis will only be useful for us after a couple of years where the ranking indexes will truly have a meaning for the reputability of AUCY.

☐ **Foresee specific numbers/limits with respect to the annual budget modifications based on specific financial or other types of measurable criteria.**

As conclusions to our investigations the courses can run with a minimum number of eight students. The more quality students the better the performance of the department. An estimated budget is 600,000 euro regarding the cost of operation with full personnel being hired. As we have discussed with EEC we will be progressively be hiring all the personnel, depending on the number of students enrolled. However, due to the exceptional set of professors applied we need serious research funding to be able to hire as much as possible personnel during the first year of operation.

☐ **The number of per year enrolled students should not affect/define the number of faculty positions on a per year basis; faculty members should be involved with longer than**

a single academic year contracts, so as to ensure stability and strengthen the sense of academic team building under the same AUCY affiliation.

☐ **Provide a feasibility study including an assessment of the practicality of the proposed financing plan.**

☐ **Provide risk assessment scenarios and propose solutions based on the worst case scenarios, especially with respect to student enrollments and securing of external funding resources**
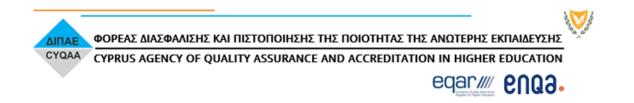
Yes, we will start with three year contracts for the professors with computer science specializations and outstanding qualifications. It is obvious by the questions of the EEC if the number of students is low, below eight, there will be no department. The more students the more personnel will be needed. This is a standard methodology for all private universities. We have been asked to perform risk assessment on various scenarios. If the number of students is low the whole project is at risk. Our aim is to hire the best available professors, bring significant amounts of international funding and hire as many professors as a relationship of the number of students enrolled. Private universities are self-funded and do not rely on public funding to always be on the safe side. These things are standard for all private universities in Cyprus. There are cases where already established universities have departments with no students and they survive based on the funding they get from other successful departments. In our case it is our first department within the Faculty and we will strive to see it growing and be developed to a department of teaching and research excellence. An advantage that AUCY has is that is a non-profit organization and maybe the only non-profit private university in Cyprus, to the best of my recollection. This means that we have the flexibility to cope with slight difficult situations, since when our financial situation is good, all profit is invested back to research and teaching and possibly there will be enough capital earned to overcome a difficult financial situation.

☐ **The EEC recommends a more collegial approach to department management.**

☐ **The EEC strongly recommends that this responsibility lies with the dean and executive management instead.**

It is not part of our intention to burden the Head with extra responsibilities. The Head will follow the academic path we have agreed upon his hiring. Various committees and senior members at the ranks of Associate Professors and Professors will be initially more responsible for stabilizing the committees and all issues related to the smooth operation of the Department of Computer Sciences. The Dean and the executive management is currently responsible for all the procedures. The Head is currently being trained to be familiarized with the procedures, deal with departmental issues and responsibilities are being shared. Program coordinators exist that will reduce the burden of the Head. Tutors will be assigned for each student that will mentor them through their university life. All of our members of staff are research oriented and we will make sure that provisions are made to each one of them so they can continue their research at a world class pace.

The hiring process of the Head of Department took more than 9 months. Dr Evangelides was chosen for his good administrative skills, as he held a similar position at his previous employer. Dr Evangelides is a relatively young person and it is also expected by him to do quality research and perform other activities that Lecturer/Assistant Professors do. Therefore, by no means responsibilities would simply be thrown at him. Various committees will be formed, collective decisions will be made and the weight of serious decisions would initially be placed to the more senior Faculty members at the ranks of Associate Professor and full Professor. Responsibilities will

be assigned to the Dean and also at University level if it is required. Therefore, it is implied that a series of committees will be formed in time to spread the burden of decision making and heavy administrative work. Sample committees will include:

1. Quality Assurance Committees at University Level
   I. Academic Committee
   II. Administrative Committee
   III. Disciplinary Committee

       1.1 The role of the committees:
   1. The Academic Committee will deal with all matters related to the academia and graduation of students.
   2. The Administrative/Managerial Committee will deal with all matters related to the correct functioning of the University.
   3. The Disciplinary Committee will deal with all matters related to disciplinary issues that may appear in a University environment.

       1.2 Composition and function of the committees:

I. **Academic Committee**
   Composition
   1. University Level representative
   2. The Dean of the Faculty
   3. The Head of the Department
   4. The Program Coordinator.
   5. An admission representative
   6. A student representative

   Duties and Responsibilities
   - Consider the reports of committees of inquiry concerning academic levels attained in the University
   - The Academic Committee with FDC are responsible for the recruitment of the faculty staff
   - Monitor the criteria for progress, promotion and graduation of students
   - Monitors the implementation of curricula, their effectiveness and learning levels
   - Internal recommendations are prepared for the Dean of the Faculty and the Rector on matters related to general academic activities of the University and especially the efficiency and teaching quality of teaching and the students' achievements

II. **Administrative Committee**
   Composition
   1. Program Coordinator
   2. The Director of Administration and Finance
   3. A member from the Deans.
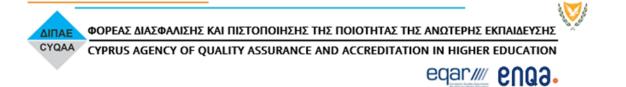   4. The Library Manager

   Duties and Responsibilities
   - Implements administrative policy as formulated by the AUCY Council.
   - Submits recommendations to the Dean of the Faculty and the Rector regarding the implementation of administrative policies and problems that arise.
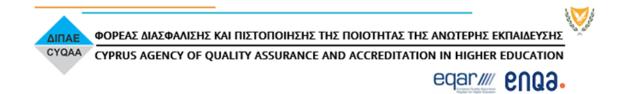
III. **Disciplinary Committee**
   Composition
   1. University Level representative

2. Dean of the Faculty
3. The Head of the Department
4. Program Coordinator.
5. A representative of the teaching staff
6. A studentre presentative

Duties and Responsibilities

- Examines misconduct and general differences of students or academicians
- Impose penalties.
- Reports to the Rector of the University

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Prof. Marc Zabbal	**Rector**	
Prof. George Phylactou	**Vice-Rector**	
Prof. George Dekoulis	**Dean of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology**	
Prof. Marios Katsioloudes	**Dean of the Faculty of Business**	
Dr. Pavlos Evangelides	**Head of the Department of Computer Sciences**	
Farid Haikal	**Marketing and Admissions Director**	

Date: 26/1/2021