ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

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

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Doc. 300.1.2

Date: June 2021

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:** Larnaca College

- **Town:** Larnaca

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

  In Greek:

  - Μεταπτυχιακό στη Δημόσια Διοίκηση και Διακυβέρνηση

  - Μεταπτυχιακό στην Εκπαιδευτική Διοίκηση (12 μήνες/90 ECTS/Μεταπτυχιακό).

  In English:

  - Master of Arts in Public Management and Governance (MA, 12 Months, 90 ECTS)

  - Master of Arts in Education Management (MA, 12 Months, 90 ECTS)

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

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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].

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

![ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA] ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*

- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

  - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
  - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*

- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*

- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

We would like to highlight the important benefits of the suggestions/recommendations made by the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and also for the fruitful and productive dialogue which had a positive influence on the education operations and practices of Larnaca College.

It is of immense importance to acknowledge that there was a thorough and in-depth analysis and evaluation which led to a practical discussion which was well received by all participating faculty and administrative members involved in the program under accreditation.

Indeed, we thank you all for your insightful suggestions/recommendations because we continuously aim to improve and enhance the quality of the proposed academic programs of study for prospective students.

At the same time, we would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to CYQAA for promoting an ethos and philosophy of Quality in Education with excellent results so far.

Please allow us to respond in a bullet format first to your recommendations for improvement and then to the findings recorded by the EEC.

We hope to provide all relevant information to explain the actions taken to ensure that the newly proposed programs are of high quality.

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

The EEC has raised the following issues followed by a list of recommendations of how to improve the situation. The response for each issue is shown below for each point that is raised.

EEC Findings

We refer here to the Larnaca College Application for Evaluation – Accreditation Document: 200.1 and Annex 4. Quality Standards and Indicators.

The quality standards and indicator self-assessment completed by the committee of Larnaca College was surprising. To suggest that there is no need to involve a systematic review of educational provision to maintain and improve its quality, equity, and efficiency review, suggest a lack of understanding of EQF and how,

> Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system a system that, forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution. It supports the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility. for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. To facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available. (ESG, 2015, p. 11).

Policies enshrine the importance of quality assurance, and the processes are to be mapped clearly and understood by faculty members.

The Committee was surprised that the internal quality assurance documentation (Annex 4) was not self critical (e.g. every category was scored as a 5).

Strengths

The Programme aims to address an important market need for provision in these areas.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Immediate areas: College Webpage needs to be updated and maintained, including to reflect the profile of Faculty.

Policies and processes regarding plagiarism should be strengthened, and more responsibility placed in the hands of the College.

The Committee heard that there was a zero drop out rate for students, which is surprising given the tight re-sit and resubmission processes stated in the documentation.

Response by Larnaca College:

In reference to your recommendations for improvement:

- **College Webpage:** is now updated and all faculty reflect the faculty profiles as in the program application. However, we need to clarify that by law we cannot upload the CVs of lecturers who are not currently teaching on any of our programs but would be teaching on the program once the program gets accredited. This will be resolved once the program gets accredited and starts to run.

- **Plagiarism**: In regards with the plagiarism policies, we would like to assure the EEC that Larnaca College has a policy in place with associated processes (see Quality Manual and Policy, pp. 8-11). This policy helps faculty members and students understand the policy and processes regarding plagiarism. Detailed guidance on how to properly acknowledge sources used in writing and different tools where students can check their work for plagiarism can be found on the College's Website https://www.larnacacollege.ac.cy/libraries/tools/. Also, students can benefit from taking an online presentation which has been specifically developed for student support to provide a useful overview of the issues surrounding plagiarism and practical ways to avoid it. This is further supported by a well structure referencing guide which is also attached. Larnaca College utilizes two plagiarism software, the Plagiarisma.net (premium) and Grammarly's plagiarism checker (premium). Both faculty members and students have practical experience with these two software packages. Training is provided to faculty members on an annual basis concerning the efficient use of the plagiarism software packages and there is also IT support available to both students and faculty members in relation to these issues.

- **Student Dropout rate:** In regards with the zero dropout, we would like to clarify that indeed there were no dropouts at all during the last year of the MBA Public Management operation. Apart from two students who withdraw in order to continue their studies abroad. The re-sit and resubmission processes stated in the documentation are approved by the Ministry of Education and we are obliged to follow them.

In reference to your Findings:

- **Lack of Understanding of EQF:** Larnaca's College policy for Quality Assurance is not only based on processes and procedures to get the job done. Larnaca College promotes an Ethos of Quality Culture in everything we do. We firmly believe and demonstrate that: Quality Academic institutions are comprised of quality Educators (with international experience) and researchers (Faculty and Administration) who produce/offer the highest possible standards of quality in Education. In regards with the quality assurance policy and framework we would like to assure the EEC that all quality procedures and policies are in place. On the contrary, at Larnaca College this is our priority and therefore a policy and framework are in place to safeguard the systematic review of educational provision at all levels of our institution (see Quality Policy and Manual). The quality assurance protocols ensure that pedagogical decisions, teaching and assessment processes and outcomes are being achieved and efforts are continuously made to further improving the institution at all

levels. Furthermore, the proposed program was developed after extensive consultation with experts in the field of education. The curriculum was developed and will be constantly updated in accordance with market demands and student/teacher interactive feedback, who are considered to be the key stakeholders. The many specialists involved from both Larnaca College and professional life guarantee, together with feedback of the students, the outstanding quality, the scientific nature and the practical orientation of the program. This "interaction" is vital for the program and very relevant to keep a good balance between various components of the program and the education sector. The same applies for the MA in Public Management and Governance specialization.

- **Quality Assurance Not Self-critical:** We have already clarified to the EEC and demonstrated with practical examples our focus on Quality and enhanced standards which, we have in place to fully comply with the ESG 2015 and CYQAA requirements. Nevertheless, it is quite understandable that during a virtual assessment important points may have been neglected. In addition, we have very carefully and in a collective effort developed a new handbook specifically for the proposed new program, MA in Education Management, which highlights in detail the important elements of Quality Procedures and Quality Assurance which will safeguard and secure Quality Standards in education in line with the European Standards and Guidelines. We have also emphasized that an external quality verifier will be used who will have direct contact with the Rector, the Academic affairs and the College Council which is something that will significantly boost the quality procedures, and it is clearly mentioned in the Quality Manual and Policy. Quality Assurance is an on-going process that continues throughout the duration of a program in a formative manner as well as at the end of a program in a summative exercise. The ultimate aim is the improvement and enhancement of the program and it is important that all stakeholders – students, staff and external stakeholders – are facilitated in their engagement with the process. To ensure this, the following procedures are implemented to safeguard the Quality Assurance of the Program:

> **Anonymous questionnaires for each teaching activity:** The anonymous student questionnaires are administered at the end of each semester. We use the results to give an internal evaluation of the modules/teachers/teaching material/assessment method/learning activities, and to plan the pedagogical/didactical activities for the next year.

> **Student Representatives:** Each year students from each department/program elect a "class president", a representative, who can speak on behalf of the entire class, in order to have a direct dialogue in case of particular issues that involve the relevant cohort/class. The Program Coordinators are available to deal with the issues during the semester and provide two dedicated office sessions per week.

> **Alumni Ties**: The Program Coordinators will create a network on the Internet (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) in which prospective students can meet alumni in order to gain information, tips, suggestions and opinions. We will make efforts to have former students engaged, who were positively influenced by the program, so they can share their feelings with the others.

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

EEC Findings:

The proposed Masters in educational management offer 4 specialized modules: 1. Leading, Managing and Developing People, 2. Globalization and Educational Policy, 3. Leadership and Context in Education and 4. Quality and Improvement in Education. It would have been of benefit to understand the reason for the large amount of content in each of the modules, how each of the module related to each other and the programs learning objectives/ outcomes.

The teaching and learning process was unclear in all four modules and it appeared that each module's teaching method was the same across all modules. Each module included far too much content that needed to be covered to ensure deep learning. A clearer explanation of student-centred teaching methodology is necessary.

Combining theoretical perspectives with practical concerns about staff management and development is underdeveloped and needs to be clarified.

The process of assessment tasks is unclear. It is not acceptable to write that there are several assessment tasks used e.g., Class assessment, oral presentation, discussion, and coursework to be followed by 2 assessment tasks e.g., midterm assessment 40% and final assessment 60%. Unfortunately, there was not a discussion about assessment or the importance of criterion during the site visit.

The Learning Outcomes appeared to the Committee to read as quite a generic list. It was not clear how each of the Learning Outcomes were to be translated in practice in the modules. For example, in Education Management, it was ambiguous as to whether the Learning Outcome of 'project management' meant the management of a student project or essay; or it referred to the way in which the program would equip students to develop their capacity to manage and lead significant projects of organisational change. In the latter case, the Committee did not see examples of how the modules and the pedagogy would support this outcome.

Regarding the Public Management and Governance stream, there was insufficient differentiation between the new program and the existing specialist MBA. We acknowledge the change to the structure/ time frame proposed but the module content seems to be directly transposed from the MBA, despite the philosophy and objectives of an MBA and of a specialist Masters being somewhat distinct from each other. The Committee was not satisfied that the distinctive purpose of the new programme had been sufficiently considered and articulated.

The Committee recognises the introduction of the concept of 'governance' to the title of the new programme. However, it is not clear how this new element will be approached and how its introduction has re-shaped the programme and its modules.

Strengths

The programme would allow working/ post-practice students to study in a modular programme.

EEC Areas of improvement and recommendations:

Articulate a clearer set of outcomes and relate these systematically to individual modules.

The relative weight of research methods training should be increased in both programmes

Response by Larnaca College:

In reference to your recommendations for improvement:

- **Clearer set of outcomes:** Larnaca College has decided to accept that the Learning Outcomes of each of the specializations proposed need to change as indicated by the EEC.

  The Old Indented learning outcomes for the specialization **MA in Public Management and Governance**:
  By the end of the Program, it is expected that students will develop:

  - A rigorous and culturally-sensitive understanding of the key concepts and issues underpinning the practice of public administration nationally and internationally.
  - The ability to critically analyze structures and processes in public administration and service management.
  - A thorough understanding of the processes of public policy and management and the factors that may influence the success or failure of public policies.
  - An in depth understanding of the relationship between leadership and management in government.
  - A critical understanding of public economics at international, national and sub-national levels.

  The NEW Intended Learning Outcomes for the **MA Public Management and Governance**:
  By the end of the MA Public Management and Governance, it is expected that students should be able to:

  - Develop a systematic understanding of relevant knowledge about private business or public organisations, their external context and how they are managed nationally and internationally
  - Apply relevant knowledge to a range of complex situations taking account of its relationship and interaction with other areas of the business or organisation
  - Develop a critical awareness of current issues in private business or public organizations, public management and governance which is informed by leading edge research and practice in the field
  - Develop an understanding of appropriate techniques sufficient to allow detailed investigation into relevant private business and public organizations and public management and governance issues
  - Develop creativity in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to develop and interpret knowledge in business/organizations and public management and governance
  - Develop a conceptual understanding that enables them to:
    a. evaluate the rigour and validity of published research and assess its relevance to new situations

b. use existing research and scholarship to identify new or revised approaches to practice

o Conduct research into business/organizations and public management and governance issues that requires familiarity with a range of business data, research sources and appropriate methodologies, and for such to inform the overall learning process

o Communicate effectively using a range of media (for example, orally, in writing, and through digital media)

o Operate effectively in a variety of team roles and take leadership roles, where appropriate

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o Take an international perspective including understanding the impact of globalisation on businesses, societies and the environment and the ethical implications.

The old Indented learning outcomes for the specialization **MA Education Management:**

By the end of the Program, it is expected that students will develop:

o Reflective and critical capabilities, alongside the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to a variety of educational leadership challenges in the education sector

o A number of career-enhancing skills such as interpersonal skills, research skills, oral and written skills, independent working, and effective project management which are necessary abilities as an educational leader/manager.

o Alternative perspectives on the purposes of education, training, teaching and current or emerging educational matters

o An understanding of how theories of leadership influence specific leadership process adopted within an institution/organization

The NEW Intended Learning Outcomes for the MA Education Management:

By the end of the MA Education Management, it is expected that students should be able to:

o Identify and critically analyze bibliography-based research through scientific sources in the context of education

o Conduct high quality research in the area of educational management

o Develop a broad understanding of the educational organization as a social system and understand the dynamic environment in which the educational institution and the educational system operate

o Apply management theories and models to a variety of educational settings and contexts

o Critically assess theories of educational leadership and be able to respond to a variety of educational leadership challenges in the education sector

o Critically assess major emerging issues for management and governance of educational institutions

o Appreciate the influence of structures, motivation, conflict management, cultures and decision-making processes on educational organizations

- Develop knowledge and understanding of theoretical and practical approaches to school improvement, effectiveness and quality
- Identify the theoretical and practical aspects of the evaluation of teaching, school evaluation and staff evaluation
- Review selected research, theory and practices relating to quality and effectiveness that contribute in the improvement of education institutions
- Understand the basic principles of education policy and recognize factors that influence policy-making

Note: It is worthwhile to note, as best practice paradigm, that the UK QAA has published 46-honors degree benchmark statements and a few for Master's degrees to make explicit the general academic characteristic and standards of honors degrees in the UK. These statements provided an overview of the subject-specific abilities, general intellectual skills and other key skills that students studying a particular area should gain over the lifetime of their degree studies and were taken into consideration in developing the program specification for the proposed program of study by all faculty members and IQC involved. Specifically, the following Subject Benchmark Statement Master's Degrees in Business and Management June 2015 (available at https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/sbs-business-and-management-15.pdf?sfvrsn=1997f681_16).

- **Weight of research methods**:
  To enhance and add value to the existing Applied Research Methods module, further seminars will be developed and will be running throughout the academic year to improve the research skills. These seminars can be, research ethics and integrity, writing and presenting your research, managing your research, literature review methods, quantitative and qualitative analytical methods and approaches.

  In reference to your Findings:

- **Large amount of content in Modules:** The program team has revised and updated the specialized modules and the content is now in line with the EEC suggestions/recommendations.

- **Teaching and learning process was unclear:**

At Larnaca College we do the utmost to enrich teaching and learning and create a positive and encouraging environment for students to enjoy their studies. Some of the teaching and learning strategies we use are the following:

-eLearning. Due to covid 19, most academic institutions have developed a virtual learning environment. Larnaca College is using MS TEAMS and Moodle. Electronic material created by lecturers, study notes and papers, ONLINE tests, or Access to relevant audio and video material is provided to all students.

-Discussions: Students are encouraged to discuss any theory that they have read in class or independently. Discussions are an important part of the overall master's experience

-Field trips: Fieldwork or field trips are a compulsory element of some courses. It enables students to put theoretical knowledge into practice.

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- Problem-based based learning, groups are presented with a real-life problem or scenario, and you will need to work as a team to investigate potential solutions while identifying what skills or knowledge you need to effectively manage the situation.

- Problem-based/Enquiry-based learning, groups are presented with a real-life problem or scenario, and you will need to work as a team to investigate potential solutions while identifying what skills or knowledge you need to effectively manage the situation.

- Co-curricular activities: involvement in co-curricular activities is another way for students to build upon the knowledge, skills, and abilities they are developing in their graduate management programs and further develop their soft skills.

- **Combining theoretical perspectives with practical concerns:**

Larnaca College offers a wide range of online and virtual training to further improve the faculty and administration members of the institution. The aim is to enhance a quality culture by engaging faculty and administration members in personal and professional development for the own benefit, the institution and the students. Therefore, Larnaca College will organize additional training activities on topics such as equality and diversity, public engagement and research development, communication, training and learning, assessment design and student feedback, mentoring etc. It is also important to mention the two supportive seminars which had taken place before submitting the proposed program of study pertaining to the Quality Assurance.

1) A seminar which was presented by a collaborating Establishment" university of |Thrace" By Professor Vassilis Tsiantos who has practically demonstrated important features, of quality assurance. "Lessons learned from Accreditation agencies".

2) A second seminar was presented by Nacia Charalambous from the State University of Cyprus, with a Topic, "Educate the Educator, Quality in Education"

- **Assessment Methods**: In developing the assessment methods, Larnaca College took into consideration the ECTS Users' Guide 2015 where "assessment methods include the whole range of written, oral and practical tests/ examinations, projects and portfolios that are used to evaluate the student's progress and ascertain the achievement of the learning outcomes of a course unit or module, whereas assessment criteria are descriptions of what the student is expected to do, in order to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved. In order to be appropriate, the assessment methods and criteria chosen for an educational component have to be consistent with the learning outcomes that have been defined for it and with the learning activities that have taken place" (p.27). It was therefore decided to keep an open and generic method of assessment for all modules included in the program specification and allow each lecturer the academic freedom to adjust the assessment criteria as he/she believes is best. In Annex 1 you can see how a module with such an approach (open and generic assessment methods) becomes specific and explicit. Larnaca College faculty members use an assessment matrix to ensure that all the assessment objectives are covered in the assessment in a suitable way. This helps to ensure that the assessment is both reliable and valid. An assessment brief is also used.

- **Learning Outcomes/Generic:** The program team has revised and updated the learning outcomes of each module and now are line with the EEC suggestions/recommendations.

- **MA Public Management and Governance and MBA Specialization:** We would like to note that the speciality Public Management is already offered in the already accredited MBA program in English. Our request to CYQAA was to be authorised to offer the same program in Greek, mainly because of students demand. However, the CYQAA informed Larnaca College that we have to submit a new application in order to be able to offer it in Greek. In regards with the comment of EEC that Annex 4 which was completed by the Internal Quality Committee of Larnaca College noting every quality indicator at level 5 (indicating high quality) is because the very same program of study MBA Public Management is already accredited by External Verifiers and CYQAA and the above-mentioned program runs successfully for the past year and a half.

- **The addition of 'governance':** The program team has made changes to the specialised modules of Public Management and Governance and re-shaped the program and its modules so that the content now reflects to the addition of the concept/term governance.

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3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

EEC Findings:

The organisation of the site visit by the College was inadequate to learn about the teachers working at the college. The teachers present did not have access to their own computer. Instead, they took turns to meet with the EEC Committee via one computer, and that made the entire process of learning about the teaching staff and about their thoughts about teaching and research and about the postgraduate program difficult and unnecessarily stressful. Also, not all listed teachers were present, and in particular the absence of one of the proposed programme coordinators made it difficult to evaluate the plans.

The College website did not provide accurate information about the schools current teaching staff, or about the recruitment process. Several of the CVs or bios that were provided to the EEC Committee were not up to date making it hard to learn about each teacher's background. In addition, the committee found several discrepancies between the information provided in the application form and the information on teaching staff on the website and the CVs. Additional revised documents were sent to the Committee after the meeting. On the one hand it was helpful to have these. On the other not having them in advance undermined the ability of the Committee to approach the meetings in a fully informed way.

Given that there already is an MBA Public Management, and the courses for the new programme are the same, there appears to be a sufficient quantity of lecturing staff, though the same cannot be said about the quantity for the programme in educational management.

There are serious issues in relation to the quality of the teaching staff, in particular their academic background. A majority of the teaching staff appear to be disconnected from the wider international academic debate in their respective disciplines. This has consequences for the content and quality of the courses. This points to the strategic need for the College to invest in staff development, including research activities in the College. The documentation provided little evidence of the strategy for doing so.

Little to no evidence was found in relation to activities of teachers´ development or teaching innovation

Strengths

The committee observed a high level of commitment among some of the core teaching staff of the proposed programmes when they explained their approach to designing and teaching their courses.
Some more recently hired individual teaching staff have stronger academic qualifications.

EEC Areas of improvement and recommendations:
The college needs to develop a policy to strengthen the research profile of the teaching staff and to provide sufficient resources for teaching staff to participate in the scholarly debates in their discipline.

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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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The College needs to invest in staff by providing opportunities for teaching staff to attend courses on teaching development, and by reducing the precarious nature of the position of some of the teaching staff.

Credential checks of teaching staff and senior (academic) leadership need to be improved, with particular attention for the quality of the PhD awarding institution, and the quality of publication outlets where they publish their scholarly work.

The overall academic level and in particular the research profile of the teaching staff, especially in education management, needs to be brought up to a level that is expected in a master-degree granting institution.

It is important that new appointees are integrated into the College and supported to influence policies, practices and standards as part of a wider culture of improvement.

A formal policy for the allocation of courses and on the division of time between research and teaching needs to be developed. Such a policy also needs to address the principles of academic autonomy in the grading process.

The system for teaching staff evaluation needs to be formalised, including the use of course and programme evaluations

Response by Larnaca College:

In reference to your recommendations for improvement:

- **Strengthening the research profile of the teaching staff:**

  Larnaca College has a research policy in place and a faculty development policy aiming to develop and strengthen the research profile of the teaching staff. The institution also provides funding (see faculty development grant application form) for faculty members to continue their professional development through leave of absence for research, study or teaching at another university, additional graduate work in each faculty's discipline, attendance of professional meetings, in -service trainings (i.e., seminars on how to raise the research profile, how to choose the right journal and use the right keywords, educate the educator, quality assurance etc

- **Teaching/Training Development of Teaching Staff:** Larnaca College invests in their staff by offering the opportunity for teaching training development. Provides funding for faculty members to continue their professional development through: a) leave of absence for research, b) study or teaching at another university, c) additional graduate work in each faculty's field, d) attendance of professional meetings, and e) in-service training). A research Methods lecture has been arranged in October 2021 which will be delivered by Sevasti Hadjittofi deputy professor at the University of Thrace, Greece. Many more lectures from visiting professors will follow. Both lecturers and postgraduate students can attend.

- **Credential Checks:** All of our potential teachers in the programs Public Management and Governance and Education management have all received their PhDs from highly ranking

accredited universities from Europe and North America. In reference to quality of publication outlets most of our professors have published academic articles in high-ranking specialty journals but we will strive for more publications.

- **Teaching Staff research profile:**
  It is very clearly evidence by looking carefully at the CVS of each one of them, as well as at their research and empirical work. Undoubtedly, the team of scientists who will be teaching in the proposed program will be supported by academic visitors from Cyprus and overseas academic context for all types of modules, but this condition does not require the involvements of additional academic staff before the program is even approved and "run" at least in the first semester. Besides the lockdown effect which was imposed on research because of the Covid-19, Larnaca College is already working on a proposed research program which aims to identify literacy practices in schools in Cyprus. It will be a wide research and parents and teachers will be involved respectively. In addition, the College Council is committed that once the program is running it will financially and administratively support all academic staff research activities. New members of Larnaca College faculty aim at publishing in peer reviewed journals (top ranking). For example, Dr. Andreas Kirlappos has recently published a research article in the Journal of Local Government Studies.

- **New appointees:** Larnaca College always strives to hire the best qualified professors available globally.

- **Allocation of Courses:** All faculty at Larnaca College are responsible for teaching, researching and administrative work with reduced teaching load. This allows for further teaching needs to be enhanced and also addresses the principles of academic autonomy/freedom.

- **Teaching Staff Evaluation:** One of the roles of the Internal Quality Committee is to evaluate the aims and objectives of each academic program, review assessment practices and grading procedures, review teaching methods, study student evaluations, study human and physical resources and staff development issues. The Committee performs two quality assurance and review procedures, the Annual Programme Review Procedure and the Semester Programme Review Procedure. The Annual program review procedure provides faculty with the opportunity to reflect critically on the day-to-day operations, identify problems and seek solutions. The review takes place in June immediately after the announcement of the results of the Spring Semester final examinations. In this procedure, during the department meeting the Academic Director along with the Academic Committee and program coordinators from each department participate. Following this procedure, the Academic Director is then responsible to prepare a report that is submitted to the College Director/President of the College Council. The report is thorough as it considers possible changes in the content and structure of the programs as well as the modes of their delivery. Generally, this is a report with recommendations for improving the programs of the College.

  During the Annual Program Review Procedure, the Internal Quality Committee typically is involved in the semester program review reports of the Program Committees, Students' evaluations of the program and faculty, Data on student enrolment, performance, withdrawal rates and employment, Comments by employers of Larnaca College graduates;

Comments of Accreditation Teams that evaluated the program during the period under review; Comments by faculty who teach in the program;

In the Semester Program Review Procedure each faculty member participates during a departmental meeting. The Program Specific Committees (each program has its own committee) is composed of the faculty members involved, the program coordinator and the Director of Academic Affairs. The Program Review Procedure takes place at the end of each semester (Fall & Spring). The purpose is to evaluate upon completion of the following:

a) Peer review and peer observation feedback
b) Programme Performance Appraisals
c) Registration and approval of grades

The Peer Review is conducted at least 2 weeks before the end of each semester, in which one faculty member performs a peer observation to another and prepares a peer observation feedback. This is monitored by each program coordinator. The program coordinator then generates the results of both semesters through the Faculty Appraisal procedure and submits them to the Director of Academic Affairs at the end of the Academic Year.

The Programme Performance Appraisals is an annual on-going process of professional development and growth. Program Appraisals are conducted by the program coordinators and submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs for the annual program review procedure at the end of the academic year.

The Performance Appraisal includes the Peer review and peer observation feedback (classroom evaluation), the Student Evaluation on faculty members and modules and the Teaching Assessment methods/Innovations/Recommendations. To ensure student engagement, Larnaca College performs student evaluations of teaching effectiveness (course evaluations) to provide feedback to faculty in order to help them to improve their teaching or alter the module content, to measure student engagement and learning and also these are used in tenure, merit and promotion decisions and teaching evaluations. Further to this, students are being asked to evaluate each module. This provides a consistency in the student experience and also serves as an audit trail and evidence base for internal and external reporting purposes. It also helps faculty members to make changes to modules if necessary. Student engagement is crucial to the quality of the College's teaching and learning. Students are involved in a number of reviews such as the Internal Periodic Review (every 5 years), Annual Program Review and the Semester Program Review. For more details kindly see attached the quality manual and policy.

In reference to your Findings:

- **Inadequate Organization of the online site visit:** It is true that we experienced internet connection issues but this was due to the upgrading of 5G in the area. We have purchased a mobile router in order to be able to cope with the external evaluation. Therefore, at some stage we had only 3 PCs available to communicate with the EEC. Nevertheless, we can understand the inconvenience and sympathize with the disruption but once again we would like to make it clear that it was not up to the college control. Apparently, Dr. Uusimaki one of the members of the EEC missed the presentation of both proposed programs of study for her own reasons, which is understandable that during an external virtual evaluation

such issues may occur. We hereby, want to confirm that all lecturers of the program were present apart from the MA in Education Management coordinator who was substituted by the head of Academic Affairs and another lecturer in education management since she had an emergency eye operation and besides, she has appeared in the meeting with a patch covering half of her face to excuse herself. We have informed the EEC meeting and they were sympathetic. Besides that, all teaching staff who are listed were present. In addition, a visiting professor participated actively during the accreditation process.

- **Accurate Information on the College website**: as mentioned before in this document changes have been made on the college website.

- **Little to no evidence of teachers´ development or teaching innovation**: Policies and procedures about the faculty recruitment process, promotion and development are in place at Larnaca College (see the Quality Manual and Policy).

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

EEC Findings

The Committee talked to several administrative staff involved in the admissions procedure. The committee also talked with two current students in the College, who expressed satisfaction with the quality of teaching and infrastructure. The Committee would have liked to talk to a larger selection of students. However, the Committee expresses concern about the freedom of the students and graduates to express themselves freely during the meeting we had with them.

A student Handbook was provided that explains the main rules and regulations that apply to students who (wish to) participate in the programme.

The committee is concerned about the information it received from Academic Affairs that there is no drop-out and that all admitted students eventually finish the programme, especially in light of the procedures for retake described in the student handbook. This raises concerns about academic standards.

The policy on plagiarism puts all responsibility for avoiding plagiarism on the students, but the college does not appear to use any plagiarism detection software.

Insufficient documentation on student recognition and certification is included in the application for accreditation, and so we have found these to be non-compliant.

Strengths

The college has a dedicated administrative team to manage admissions

EEC: Areas of improvement and recommendations:

The College is urged to develop a good monitoring system to track student progress.

Credential checks of students applying to be admitted need to further formalise the recognition of the earlier obtained bachelor degrees or equivalent qualification.

Even though the proposed programme will be in Greek, the documentation that was provided to the committee detailed the English proficiency standards expected from students. These standards are relatively low, and we also suggest a stricter application of the language requirements, in particular for applicants who are not required to pass a formal exam or test.

Response by Larnaca College:

In reference to your recommendations for improvement:

- **Monitoring system to track student progress**:
  To ensure and track student progress Larnaca College provides a transcript to students at each stage of their study which records their achievement in different elements of the program. This is a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect on their personal academic development and progression during their studies.

- **Admission Requirements**:

The following admission requirements are approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture:

a) A Bachelor Degree from a recognized national or international academic institution or another recognized equivalent qualification.

b) English Language Requirements if the program is in English. Proficiency in English, can be demonstrated through the following certificates:

- Candidates who hold a degree from a recognized university program taught in English are considered to have proficiency in English.
- I.E.L.T.S. minimum average score 5.5.
- I.G.C.C. English with a minimum grade "C".
- G.C.E. O-Level English with a minimum grade "C".
- T.O.E.F.L. with a minimum score of 550 (Paper-based) or T.O.E.F.L. with a minimum score 173 (Computer-based) or T.O.E.F.L.
- Any other equivalent exam that will prove proficiency in English language.

- **Standards and Language requirements**:

Please see above

In reference to your Findings:

- **Talking to a larger number of students**:
  It is very important to highlight that because of the pandemic teaching and learning is online and the majority of students are also professionals therefore we have gathered one home student and another international both members of the student union.

- **Freedom of Students to talk**: Students are considered to be full partners and active stakeholders during the accreditation process and therefore are given the opportunity to fully express their personal learning experience during their studies at Larnaca College freely without any guidance by the College. It is noteworthy to mention that one of the students who participated is a police officer with the Anti-Drug Squat of Cyprus Police who has successfully completed the Bachelor degree and he is currently registered on the MBA Public Management. The majority of our students are police officers and civil servants. Therefore, it is fair to argue that the majority of our students are professionals who seek to enrich their knowledge and skills in order to obtain leading positions in the public service.

- **Drop-Out rate:** It is important to emphasize once more that the reason of student dropout is zero because the cohort groups are very small and the only case of withdrawal was when two students decided to continue their studies abroad.

- **Plagiarism:** In regards with this we have already responded in page 4.

- **Insufficient Student Documentation and Recognition:**
  We didn't provide any student documentation or recognition since the proposed program of study is not yet running.

5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

EEC Findings

The site visit had to happen remotely, making it difficult for the committee to assess the resources available to students. A video of campus facilities was promised, but only arrived in the middle of the day following the Evaluation visit. Meantime, the Committee consulted a number of pictures available on Google to get a basic impression of the facilities.

Larnaca College has a basic physical library, and provides access to a limited number of academic databases, in particular EBSCO. Access to other 'databases' provided on the library website mainly consists of links to open access databases and other websites.

The College uses Moodle as an online teaching tool.

The Committee has the impression ICT resources for teaching staff are insufficient based on the fact that all participants in the site visit used the same laptop to join the zoom meeting from a single room.

Strengths

The College has moved to new premises.

The Committee was told that the College has recently hired additional administrative support staff.

The two students we talked to appeared to be satisfied with classes

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The library resources need to be upgraded to reflect a new programme on education management.

Overall library resources are very limited across both programmes and the College needs to put a policy in place to expand its collections.

The Committee is not able to provide further specific recommendations due to a lack of access to the facilities.

Response by Larnaca College:

In reference to your recommendations for improvement:

- **Library resources**: Through our E-Library we provide access to a great number of electronic databases related to Education, in both English and Greek. This access comprised full-text articles, eBooks and journals. The databases we use are: EMERALD, EBSCO, ACADEMIA (PREMIUM), e-books in Greek and English. We also have Interlibrary loans with the University of Cyprus. This agreement provides users the opportunity of a better coverage of their research needs, when the local library collection does not satisfy their needs.

- **Lack of Access to the Facilities:** A new video of the college premises and facilities is attached for your review.

__In reference to your Findings:__

- **Video not on Time:**

The video was uploaded well before the accreditation took place. This has been supported by a member staff of CYQAA, Ms. Natasa Kazakaiou.

- **Insufficient ICT resources for teaching staff:**

There are sufficient ICT resources for teaching staff and besides 40 computers in the lab, there are also laptops for each lecturer. The local internet provider was upgrading to 5G and this is why some of our lecturers used a single laptop during the accreditation process.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

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B. Conclusions and Final Remarks

EEC Conclusions and Final Remarks:

The process for conducting this Evaluation was made more difficult by a number of factors. There were significant gaps in the documentation provided in advance to Committee members. In the case of faculty biographies, there was a mismatch between the profile of staff we were given and the colleagues we met on the day. Very often staff who spoke to us sat together at the same computer, making it difficult for us to see people, and to manage the conversation effectively (e.g., one 'screen name' appeared though several people shared that screen). Indeed, the evident lack of social distancing was uncomfortable to witness. Remote meetings are inevitably challenging but were made more so, unnecessarily, by these elements.

As some elements above might suggest, the proposal seems premature and somewhat 'undercooked' at this stage, and we suggest it would be better to take a longer period to consider the design, content, pedagogy, and resourcing of the programme. It appeared to the Committee that different staff members had different understandings of the programme. This suggests a failure to involve staff more collectively in the design of the programme.

The market needs analysis was insufficient and sometimes contradictory (in particular, for example, whether the programme aims to attract international students).

In the case of the Public Management and Governance programme, the Committee understand that some postgraduate students have indicated a preference for a programme of shorter duration than the existing specialist MBA. The Committee was unclear about how the College more systematically had involved wider stakeholders (including public sector organizations) in the design of the programme. In addition, the goals and objectives of the new Masters (in relation to the existing MBA) could be better articulated in terms of the distinctive principles, ethos and aims of the specialist Masters.

In the case of the Education Management programme, notwithstanding some recent recruitment, the Committee identifies a significant gap between the profile and expertise of core faculty and the demands of the new programme.

The Committee also suggests that the Aims and Objectives and the Learning Outcomes of the programme are insufficiently articulated. Sometimes the objectives and outcomes are very dense, which would make it challenging to translate these into practice. In addition, it was not entirely clear how individual modules and pedagogical practices (including assessment strategies) support the achievement of these objectives and outcomes. The balance and relationship between theory and practice was not fully explained.

As detailed in Section 1, the Committee has some reservations about how aspects of quality assurance have been embedded in the new proposal. This extends to issues such as the internal quality assurance and the extent to which stakeholders and staff have been involved in the design of the new programmes, but there was a lack of evidence presented to us about wider processes (as per Section 1).

Larnaca College Comments

o Experience teaches us that, during a virtual accreditation, things may not go as planned due to many external and uncontrollable factors. This might make quite difficult to portray the real situation and operation and moreover build a picture of the college.

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CYQAA

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- Our college has submitted all documents electronically and it can be informed for any gaps or any missing documents which have to be provided prior to the accreditation process.

- The site video it has been uploaded well before the virtual meeting took place and it has been confirmed by a member of CYQAA, Ms. Natasa Kazakaiou.

- Unfortunately, the same day of the accreditation the whole area had internet connection issues since the local internet provider was upgrading the network to 5G. The records by the official provider and Easy Service Co, doing the installation prove this.

- Indeed, the whole area and many blocks around the premises of our college, suffered the consequences. Instead of postponing the accreditation process, we tried hard to solve the unforeseen problems.

- We purchased and installed two mobile routers which were used during the accreditation, but again with limited capabilities and we were forced to grouped with others due to the limited internet connectivity, etc.

- This somehow dislocated us and altered our initial plans and possibly the image across was deformed even distorted.

- Finally, we managed the process with only two laptops and most of our faculty cyclically managed to join the virtual accreditation meeting.

- Now, we have read carefully and followed tenaciously all EEC recommendations.

- We have revised and updated the aims, learning outcomes and objectives of the program and the modules.

- We have redesigned the application and is attached for your review.

Please allow us for some additional comments that might be helpful in understanding:

- The specialty of Education Management has been widely discussed with CYQAA since it has been approved by the EEC during the MBA on site evaluation but rejected by the CYQAA with the justification that "Education Management cannot be approved since by definition an MBA does not concern Education Management".

- The CYQAA also suggested to resubmit the Education Management with a new application as a Master of Arts in Education Management in order to allow us to offer the program in Greek language.

- It is also important to emphasize that after the decision to reject the speciality MBA in Education Management another academic institution in collaboration with a UK University had announced the offer of an MBA program in Education Management and as a result all

our potential students who were ready to join the program had chosen to enrol to the UK MBA program in Education Management.

- In addition, a franchise program MBA in Education was acceptable to be offered to students in Cyprus but an MBA in Education approved by the EEC has been rejected by CYQAA with the reason which we stated above.

- Is an academic paradox, and someone could argue how come a franchise an MBA in Education is acceptable but not a local program with the same aims, objectives, learning outcomes and target students.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Dr. Andreas Kirlappos	Click to enter Position	
Dr. Evie Poyiadji	Click to enter Position	
Dr. Nick Demos	Click to enter Position	
Dr. Andreas Karyos	Click to enter Position	
Dr. Despoina Marouchou	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: Click to enter date