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Date: 10/09/2022

External Evaluation Report (Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Philips College
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** N/A
- **Department/ Sector:** N/A
- **Programme of study- Name (2 years, 120 ECTS, Diploma)**

In English:

Diploma Business Studies

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):** N/A



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 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Introduction

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) would like to thank the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) for the invitation to visit and evaluate the Diploma in Business Studies. The EEC equally thanks the College leadership and community for the open, transparent and constructive dialogues during the visit.

The evaluation took place on Wednesday the 8th of June 2022 in person. The agenda featured meetings with senior management, program coordinators, faculty, students, and administrative personnel. The evaluation and the findings and recommendations of this report were based on the meetings conducted, the presentations undertaken during the meetings and the evidence provided in the form of the self-evaluation report. Additional information was provided in areas that further evidence was deemed necessary.

As far as the student meeting was concerned there were only 2 students present (out of the 6 noted in the agenda). As such any conclusions drawn may be limited.

It is worth noting that due to Covid the evaluation did not take place within the timeframe expected. The College had an opportunity to update the materials provided to reflect the latest thinking when it comes to the strategic plan and implementation.

As this was an in-person visit, the EEC had the opportunity to visit the University and experience first-hand on-offer services and infrastructure. The EEC is confident that the report's findings and recommendations offer constructive feedback and can help strengthen success prospects of the College.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Philip Vergauwen	Professor and Chair of EEC	Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management
Fredrik Nordin	Professor	Stockholm University
Savvas Papagiannidis	Professor	Newcastle University
Artemis Stivaktaki	Student Representative	University Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

- 1.1 Policy for quality assurance
- 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
- 1.3 Public information
- 1.4 Information management

Findings

The EEC found overall compliance with the standards related to:

- (i) policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:
- (ii) design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
- (iii) public information and
- (iv) information management

The EEC notes that Philips College aspires to become a European pioneering institution in Higher Education, capable to adding to the intellectual, social, and economic development of Cyprus, planning a decisive role as a regional educational centre and providing quality research and teaching, by attracting, developing and retaining staff of first class. To this end its mission is

provide the highest possible quality education in Cyprus. The EEC suggests the College to “calibrate” its ambitions and to clarify and (explicitly) align the definition(s) of excellence with respect to education in the context of the College’s Values, Vision and Mission.

Strengths

Philips College is a member of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), which is an international organisation dedicated to building a better world through Higher Education.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The strategic position of the College in relation to its institutional academic partners needs to be further clarified. This can offer an opportunity to establish a clearer and more distinctive narrative as to the aims and objectives of the College and how its programmes are positioned in the market.

There is evidence that external feedback is used when it comes to shaping programme development. This could be potentially formalised by including industry or policy representatives in the advisory/programme board.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Partially compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

- 2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
- 2.2 Practical training**
- 2.3 Student assessment**

Findings

The EEC found overall compliance with the standards related to:

- (i) Processes of teaching and learning and student-centered teaching methodology
- (ii) Student assessment

With respect to practical training, the EEC strongly encourages the College to integrate practical training more formally into the curriculum.

The programme offered aims to follow the European Standard and Guidance, CYQAA, the internal quality policy and accreditation from professional bodies.

The EEC notes that there is a foundation course in Business Studies that can develop student skills before joining the Diploma. The Diploma is offered over 2 years / 4 semesters. Each semester has a number of core and elective modules that make it possible to personalise the programme to the students' needs and interests. The expected enrolment is 60 students.

The main target markets are Cyprus, Greece. 60% is expected to come from European Countries, while the remaining from Asian countries. There is review of student performance and actions are taken based on policies, if there is such a need.

The Quality Assurance committee features both members of faculty and students and operate processes that ensure that the program operates as expected. With respect to student-centricity, the EEC notes that the College – in addition to small scale, student-centric teaching - offers a wide range of student support services that aim to underpin both the academic, but also personal development of the students.

The library through its own collections, but also through collaboration with other Cypriot or Greek institutions (HEAL) has access to a wide range of sources. These should cater well for the research and teaching and learning demands of staff and students. The ICT infrastructure is also deemed sufficient when it comes to research and T&L matters. Microsoft based platforms are used for IT services such as email and video calls. Moodle is used as the main VLE. There are free tools used for plagiarism checking. The College is currently evaluating using a paid service.

Strengths

The College has a commendable network and is well connected to the world of practice (business and institutional).

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC notes that:

- (i) the list of names in Table 3 (p. 33) in the application for evaluation of the diploma does not seem to fully match the names in Annex 3 (p. 21-);
- (ii) quality assurance processes could have been applied and demonstrated more systematically, when it came to the development of the program;
- (iii) it is not totally clear in the report how academics, students, graduates, and others participate in developing the programme development strategy, and how they assess the demands of society and take these into account.

The EEC agrees with the College's plan to involve students more in the quality assurance processes, especially when it comes to "closing the loop" and informing students of actions implemented and the impact they had. There can be more opportunities for student to engage with practice.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC invites the College to think about the following suggestions for further improvement:

- (i) It may useful to offer English support "in-sessionally" in addition to the programme and not as part of it (e.g. as an elective). This will make it possible to bring more relevant core business modules into the curriculum;
- (ii) Modules such as corporate social responsibility, digital / IS management, strategy, marketing-related modules etc. This can help better balance the management and marketing disciplines vs the accounting and economics;
- (iii) Module learning objectives can be mapped more consistently against the programme learning objectives. Such an exercise can help demonstrate actively, if the programme learning objectives are met across the program;
- (iv) Similar mapping could be done for assessment in order to unpin a program level view as to how practising and assessment of skills and competencies takes place;
- (v) More detail and attention is necessary, when it comes to the module outline forms (e.g. reading lists and assessment).

Moreover, the EEC makes the following constructive suggestions and recommendations with respect to ILO's and QA:

- (i) For some courses (e.g., computer fundamentals, mathematics and statistics), the EEC recommends that the Intended Learning Outcomes are rewritten and framed in terms of

the specific knowledge, skills and abilities students should possess and can demonstrate upon completion of the course. The ILOs should be formulated in an active way, avoiding vague expressions such as understand, know, and be aware of;

- (ii) The description of course contents is sometimes overly extensive and detailed. Possibly Philips College could revisit these and make sure they are neither too detailed nor too short;
- (iii) The College can consider having a module that offers practical experience taking advantage of the relationships that the College has with local stakeholders and industry;
- (iv) In order to better reflect the labour market, the EEC recommends that Philips College consider directing some future recruitments to areas other than accounting and finance;
- (v) According to course descriptions, all courses are composed of a mixture of lectures, small group teaching, and case studies. Still the specific mix of these needs to be coordinated to enhance the breadth and quality of students' learning experience.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Findings

The EEC finds overall compliance with respect to the standards related to:

- (i) Teaching staff recruitment and development;
- (ii) Teaching staff numbers and status
- (iii) Synergies of teaching and research.

Colleagues in the College and involved in the programme under review have the necessary qualification to be involved in the programmes delivered that are higher than the programme in which they are involved. The majority of them have a relevant doctoral degree among other professional qualifications.

The College vision and mission do include a research angle that is seen as beneficial to the programmes on offer and the staff's career and professional development.

The workload policy suggests that about 25-35% of teaching time, 30-40% preparation, 20-30% research time and student support 10-15%. Duties are discussed and agreed on an annual basis. This appears to work reasonably well.

The recruiting plan in place aims to have a minimum 70% of resident academic staff. Other positions can be filled by visiting professors and special scientists as per necessary.

Strengths

Management aims to maintain duties as stable as possible to ensure continuity.

There is a mentoring scheme in place. This could be developed further and formalised, involving senior staff from partner institutions.

Through existing partnerships there is a sustainable source of potential talent among which the College can recruit future faculty.

The expected staff student ratio is 1:12.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The workload policy can offer time for new recruits to be inducted into the College and to support their first academic steps.

Workload needs to cover explicitly all types of contributions (such as contribution to society) that may be considered as part of the annual review or promotions.

Training programme for both research and pedagogic matters need to be developed to support staff. On the research side, considering the Institutional collaborations available, there may be an opportunity to create a “research network” that focuses on supporting colleagues. On the teaching side a T&L seminar programme can be beneficial when it comes to disseminating good practice.

Internal staff development could feature an annual peer-review of teaching that acts as a constructive process through which members of faculty can discuss and obtain feedback when it comes to existing , but also new pedagogic innovations.

The College needs to consider pragmatic ways (that ideally go beyond remuneration; which is acknowledged as an important factor) with which it could minimise churn and the impact on quality/continuity of delivery.

Although the College does subscribe to the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and adheres to employment laws with regards to equality, the EEC feels that more can be done to encourage the development of a diverse faculty (e.g. with regards to gender).

With respect to research, the EEC notes and commends the College for its use of its Research Center as its main vehicle for undertaking and disseminating research. All members of teaching faculty are members of the Center. There are a number of policies in place (e.g. with regards to obligations or members or research ethics). These appear to be in line with standard practice.

There is funding and other resources available to members in order to encourage and facilitate their research efforts (e.g. seed funding and funding for attending conferences). When it comes to academic workload, 20% of one’s time can be invested in research. Successes in generating research outputs can be used to lower teaching loads and increase research time.

Students can be potentially involved with the Center as part of faculty research projects. senior management is willing to invest in supporting research efforts, in order to create a vibrant research community.

The research ambition and strategy can be more effectively aligned with the positioning of the College in order to maximise the return of investment (e.g. when it comes to societal impact or acting as a research incubator for the College’s academic partners). In turn, this will make it possible to set appropriate and pragmatic targets that are attainable and create credibility and long-term feasibility.

It may be useful to encourage more student participation as part of their own research projects. This can help scale up research outputs that can be used for engaging local stakeholders, but also teaching (e.g. case studies).

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

- 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria
- 4.2 Student progression
- 4.3 Student recognition
- 4.4 Student certification

Findings

The EEC finds overall compliance with respect to student admission, processes and criteria. The EEC is confident that the College has all procedures and process in place to ensure standard compliance with respect to student progression and recognition and certification.

The EEC finds that pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place and that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.

Strengths

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC can only confirm its confidence in the College's processes and procedures that are in place to ensure compliance with respect to student admission, recognition and certification. With respect to student progression, the EEC has no current student data that enables it to formulate areas of improvement or recommendations.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Not applicable
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

5.2 Physical resources

5.3 Human support resources

5.4 Student support

The EEC finds overall compliance with respect to the standards pertaining:

- (i) Teaching and Learning resource
- (ii) Physical resources
- (iii) Human support resources
- (iv) Student support

Findings

Philipps College has an experience senior management team that oversees the legal and financial matters pertaining to the Institution's operations.

At the present time the administration staff that supports the student welfare services appears to be satisfactory for the small number of students enrolled. The Student Welfare Service is currently staffed by one full time Officer who has sufficient professional experience and expertise in her field. However, more administrative staff will be needed when the number of students increases.

As stated, Philips College has procedures for admitting students with disabilities and ensures equal access to academic studies. Upon admission students are required to complete an application stating if they have any disabilities or health problems and what special requirements they need during their studies. The student welfare officer will then cooperate with the external psychologist to make an assessment in order to decide on the learning support for each student.

The College has a big cafeteria, located on the ground floor, offering food and beverages to students. Students can also use for free, the sport facilities next to the cafeteria. The college amphitheatre is available to students for events such as theatre, movies etc.

Philips College seems to have a supportive learning environment in which students receive guidance and personal support. As stated, each student has an Academic Advisor who monitors their progress and guides them through their course until they graduate. Due to the small number of students, instructors also have direct contact with students offering them immediate academic

support. If students are facing a problem and do not wish to discuss it with the instructor, they can refer to their Academic Advisor or the Welfare Officer.

The College offers full or partial scholarships to candidates with high scores or financial problems. Also, the College offers sports scholarships and scholarships to families with 3 or more children. If students have difficulties in paying off their tuitions the College will offer them more flexible payment methods.

Students in need of psychological or other counselling services can contact the student welfare officer for private guidance and support. As stated, if the student welfare officer decides there is a need to refer to qualified practitioners, then she will contact the external psychologist.

The College's student welfare officer will collaborate with the University's Career Office in order to offer the appropriate information to students on any work vacancies and also provides essential services in personal guidance and development. The Career Office guides students how to prepare for a job interview, how to write a personal statement or a CV.

The College has staff members with many years of working experience in the business industry that will guide and support the students regarding the practical part in the industry. Moreover, the College has links with many professional bodies that can get exemptions.

The College tries to involve students in various student clubs and social activities such as volunteering.

The College is willing to support students to create new student clubs or other entertainment events according to their demands.

Strengths

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Based on the discussions and on inspection of the material available in the self-evaluation report, the EEC is confident that the necessary learning resources and student support systems are in place (also confirmed by students of the College we talked to). The EEC (see findings) has identified best practices and has, at this stage (new program) no specific recommendations or suggestions for further improvement.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG) NOT APPLICABLE

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Not applicable
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Not applicable
6.3	Supervision and committees	Not applicable

D. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC concludes that the programme under consideration has the potential to deliver quality education of the expected standards that overall complies with the standards of the CYQAA.

In conclusion, challenging, but achievable goals with respect to education and certainly research, set by strong leadership that is supported by the College’s diverse and inclusive community that engages in and focuses on the delivery of the high quality promise of the College, will ensure future performance at a high level. Attention to well-being, personal development and work-life balance will allow the College to maintain its capacity to attract good students and excellent staff and faculty such that the College can continue to contribute to a better society and a stronger economy in Cyprus in a global/international context.



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Philip Vergauwen	
Fredrik Nordin	
Savvas Papagiannidis	
Artemis Stivaktaki	

Date: June 10th 2022