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# External evaluation report

- **Higher education institution:**

Neapolis University Pafos

- **Town:** Pafos

- **Programme of study (Name, ECTS, duration, cycle)**

**In Greek:**

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**In English:** MSc in Digital Marketing (Distance Learning)

- **Language of instruction:** Greek / English

- **Programme's status**

**New programme:** Yes

**Currently operating:** 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 and 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015 and N. 47(I)/2016].**

## A. Introduction

The Evaluation Committee consisted of 4 academics and a student representative who visited the Neapolis University Pathos. After a briefing by the Rector of the University, the Committee received a detailed presentation on the proposed program by the academic team. This was followed by meetings with teaching and administrative staff. The Committee also had an opportunity to meet and discuss matters with student representatives. In addition, the evaluation committee toured the facilities and experienced first-hand the learning environment and services provided.

The committee would like to thank colleagues at Neapolis University Pathos for providing all the requested documentation and evidence for the purpose of conducting this evaluation and preparing this report.

These included among others:

1. Presentations to the Committee
2. Dissertation handbook and syllabus
3. Assessment guidelines for written assignments
4. Recruitment calls for permanent staff
5. CVs of permanent staff and associate teaching staff
6. Plagiarism policy
7. Assessment guidelines for written assignments
8. Dissertation samples and feedback
9. Workload policy
10. Student handbook
11. Course evaluations
12. Distance learning frameworks

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

| Name                  | Position   | University                          |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Fredrik Nordin        | Professor of Marketing   | Stockholm University                |
| Niki Panteli          | Professor of Digital Business                                      | Royal Holloway University of London |
| Pantelis Papadopoulos | Associate Professor in Educational Technology and Distant Learning | Aarhus University                   |
| Savvas Papagiannidis  | Professor of Innovation and Enterprise                             | University of Newcastle             |
| Giorgios Longinos     | Student  | University of Cyprus                |

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

#### Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*
- *The programme of study:*
  - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
  - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
  - *benefits from external expertise*
  - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
  - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
  - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
  - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
  - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*

- *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*
- *Public information (clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible):*
  - *about the programme of study offered*
  - *the selection criteria*
  - *the intended learning outcomes*
  - *the qualification awarded*
  - *the teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *the pass rates*
  - *the learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

| Quality indicators/criteria |   | 1 - 10 |
|-----------------------------|---|--------|
| 1.1                         | Academic oversight of the programme design is ensured   | 9      |
| 1.2                         | The guide and / or the regulations for quality assurance provide the adequate information and data for the support and management of the programme of study for all the years of study.                                       | 10     |
| 1.3                         | Internal Quality Assurance processes safeguard the quality and the fulfillment of the programme's purpose, objectives and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Particularly, the following are taken into consideration: |        |
| 1.3.1                       | The disclosure of the programme's curricula to the students and their implementation by the teaching staff  | 10     |
| 1.3.2                       | The programme webpage information and material  | N/A    |
| 1.3.3                       | The procedures for the fulfillment of undergraduate and postgraduate assignments / practical training   | 8      |
| 1.3.4                       | The procedures for the conduct and the format of the examinations and for student assessment  | 10     |
| 1.3.5                       | Students' participation procedures for the improvement of the programme and of the educational process  | 10     |

|       |  |     |
|-------|--|-----|
| 1.4   | The purpose and objectives of the programme are consistent with the expected learning outcomes and with the mission and the strategy of the institution.   | 10  |
| 1.5   | The following ensure the achievement of the programme's purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes:   |     |
| 1.5.1 | The number of courses  | 10  |
| 1.5.2 | The programme's content  | 8   |
| 1.5.3 | The methods of assessment  | 8   |
| 1.5.4 | The teaching material  | 10  |
| 1.5.5 | The equipment  | 10  |
| 1.5.6 | The balance between theory and practice  | 8   |
| 1.5.7 | The research orientation of the programme  | 8   |
| 1.5.8 | The quality of students' assignments   | N/A |
| 1.6   | The expected learning outcomes of the programme are known to the students and to the members of the teaching staff.  | 10  |
| 1.7   | The teaching and learning process is adequate and effective for the achievement of the expected learning outcomes.   | 9   |
| 1.8   | The content of the programme's courses reflects the latest achievements / developments in science, arts, research and technology.  | 7   |
| 1.9   | New research results are embodied in the content of the programme of study.  | 8   |
| 1.10  | The content of foundation courses is designed to prepare the students for the first year of their chosen undergraduate degree.   | N/A |
| 1.11  | Students' command of the language of instruction is appropriate.   | 10  |
| 1.12  | The programme of study is structured in a consistent manner and in sequence, so that concepts operating as preconditions precede the teaching of other, more complex and cognitively more demanding, concepts. | 6   |
| 1.13  | The learning outcomes and the content of the courses are consistent.   | 8   |
| 1.14  | The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied and there is correspondence between credits, workload and expected learning outcomes per course and per semester.  | 10  |
| 1.15  | The higher education qualification awarded to the students corresponds to the purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes of the programme.  | 7   |

|      |   |     |
|------|---|-----|
| 1.16 | The higher education qualification and the programme of study conform to the provisions for registration to their corresponding professional and vocational bodies for the purpose of exercising a particular profession. | N/A |
| 1.17 | The programme's management in regard to its design, its approval, its monitoring and its review, is in place.   | 9   |
| 1.18 | The programme's collaborations with other institutions provide added value and are compared positively with corresponding collaborations of other departments / programmes of study in Europe and internationally.        | 8   |
| 1.19 | Procedures are applied so that the programme conforms to the scientific and professional activities of the graduates.   | 7   |
| 1.20 | The admission requirements are appropriate.   | 9   |
| 1.21 | Sufficient information relating to the programme of study is posted publicly.   | N/A |
| 1.22 | The teaching methodology is suitable for teaching in higher education.  | 9   |

### Findings

The MSc in Digital Marketing (Distant Learning) is a new programme that aims to meet the business needs of the local and international labour market by providing skills and competencies related to the growing digital presence of organisations. The programme objectives, as outlined in the submission document, refer to students gaining significant strategic digital and entrepreneurial skills to join a demanding globalized market, by providing theoretical and practical insights.

It is the EEC view that Neapolis University is in a very strong position to further develop its industry links due to its association with the parent company and related industry partners. These provide for opportunities for strengthening teaching and assessment practices, as well as employability prospects.

### Strengths

The Committee feels that an MSc in Digital Marketing is in line with current market expectations and skills of new business graduates. The title of the programme is comparable to that of similar programmes offered and should be attractive to a wider range of graduates who want to specialise in digital marketing.

The programme structure features courses in three key thematic areas, namely digital marketing, innovation and enterprise, and data analytics and security. All courses have an equal weight. In addition, the programme expects students to undertake a research dissertation.

Although there is an apparent consistency between the current learning outcomes and the courses' content, the lack of alignment of the programmes content and objectives means that the teaching team will need to revisit the programme's objectives, courses offered and the overall coherency of the programme.



## Areas of improvement and recommendations

To this end there are a number of recommendations that the Committee would like to put forward when revising the programme's specification:

1. Revisit the programme objectives and learning outcomes to ensure that they consistently focus on digital marketing throughout the programme. This will ensure not only that student expectations when enrolling to a digital marketing programme are met, but also that students are prepared sufficiently for the future roles.
2. The revised programme objectives and learning outcomes will need to be reflected on a revised list of courses included in the programme specification. For example, courses like Information security (IS540) should be removed and replaced with more digital marketing specific courses (e.g. e-consumer behaviour or branding online). Similarly, courses like Big data and analytics (IS508) could be focused on digital marketing analytics (with both the title and content revised).
3. Given that this is a conversion master that can potentially attract student who have no marketing background, it could be useful to include a comprehensive foundation course in the principles of marketing in the first term.
4. With recommendations 1+2+3 implemented it will be useful to review the sequence of the courses and how they inform one-another so that the overall programme becomes more coherent. For example, Digital marketing (DM515) could appear in the first semester, given its expected prominent place in the programme called MSc in Digital Marketing.
5. Based on the nature of the programme, we recommend that the programme team, review the student assessment strategy both at the programme level, but also for each individual course. For example, embedding assessment within real life scenarios using digital technologies (e.g. social media) for mid-terms may help enhance student experience and provide them with valuable real-life exposure.
6. Where appropriate teaching practice and assessment should be informed by current marketing practice and where possible feature industry sponsored assignments.
7. Although the Committee was informed that the Dissertation (DIS600) courses included research methods training, it will be more in line with current practice, if there is a more comprehensive training in the form of a separate course (that can replace Quantitative Business Analysis (MBA260)) that covers both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The Committee believes that making the above changes will result in a more coherent Master programme that will prepare graduates sufficiently for undertaking marketing roles in the market. In doing so, it will enhance their employability and career prospects.

Please circle one of the following for: Study programme and study programme's design and development

*Non-compliant*

*Partially compliant*

*Substantially compliant*

*Fully compliant*

## 2. Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3)

### Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development and respects their needs.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for and method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*

| Quality indicators/criteria |   | 1 - 10 |
|-----------------------------|---|--------|
| 2.1                         | The actual/expected number of students in each class allows for constructive teaching and communication.                          | 10     |
| 2.2                         | The actual/expected number of students in each class compares positively to the current international standards and/or practices. | 10     |



|      |  |    |
|------|--|----|
| 2.3  | There is an adequate policy for regular and effective communication with students.   | 9  |
| 2.4  | The methodology implemented in each course leads to the achievement of the course's purpose and objectives and those of the individual modules.  | 9  |
| 2.5  | Constructive formative assessment for learning and feedback are regularly provided to the students.  | 8  |
| 2.6  | The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate, and known to the students.  | 8  |
| 2.7  | Educational activities which encourage students' active participation in the learning process are implemented.   | 7  |
| 2.8  | Teaching incorporates the use of modern educational technologies that are consistent with international standards, including a platform for the electronic support of learning.            | 10 |
| 2.9  | Teaching materials (books, manuals, journals, databases, and teaching notes) meet the requirements set by the methodology of the programme's individual courses and are updated regularly. | 9  |
| 2.10 | It is ensured that teaching and learning are continuously enriched by research.  | 9  |
| 2.11 | The programme promotes students' research skills and inquiry learning.   | 7  |
| 2.12 | Students are adequately trained in the research process.   | 7  |

### Findings / Strengths

The EEC would like to praise the University for providing the resources to maintain a small staff student ratio. This makes it possible to have regular interactions with students and provide a more personalised support. In particular, this applies to formative feedback which appears to be regular and constructive in similar programmes. The online platform also supports sufficiently the learning process and offers opportunities to introduce innovative approaches to both the teaching process, but also the assessment. This is particularly relevant to a programme such as the proposed MSc in Digital Marketing. Resources are in line with the EEC expectations and support sufficiently the student's learning experience. Plagiarism detection software was used to ensure that students met the necessary academic practice guidelines. Student special learning needs are taken into consideration where necessary. The EEC would like to commend DDM505 Digital Marketing as an exemplar of a course design with references to topics, objectives and activities on a weekly basis.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. Although the EEC has seen evidence of formative feedback of related courses, a coherent policy can be implemented across the programme.

2. Even though the EEC was pleased to see evidence of industry sponsored dissertation topics, we encourage the teaching team that this becomes a more widespread practice, where possible.

The EEC would also like to reiterate two recommendations made in the above sections in relation to innovative assessment and research skills as per below:

3. Based on the nature of the programme, we recommend that the programme team, review the student assessment strategy both at the programme team but also for each individual course. For example, embedding assessment within real life scenarios using digital technologies (e.g. social media) for mid-terms may help enhance student experience and provide them with valuable real-life exposure.
4. Although the Committee was informed that the Dissertation (DIS600) courses included research methods training, it will be more in line with current practice, if there is a more comprehensive training in the form of a separate course (that can replace Quantitative Business Analysis (MBA260)) that covers both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Please circle one of the following for: Teaching, learning and student assessment

*Non-compliant*

*Partially compliant*

*Substantially compliant*

*Fully compliant*

### 3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

#### Standards

- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Assessment of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*

| Quality indicators/criteria |  | 1 - 10 |
|-----------------------------|--|--------|
| 3.1                         | The number of full-time teaching staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, and their fields of expertise, adequately support the programme of study.   | 9      |
| 3.2                         | The members of teaching staff for each course have the relevant formal and fundamental qualifications for teaching the course, including the following:  |        |
| 3.2.1                       | Subject specialisation   | 9      |
| 3.2.2                       | Research and Publications within the discipline  | 8      |
| 3.2.3                       | Experience / training in teaching in higher education  | 10     |
| 3.3                         | The programme attracts visiting professors of recognized academic standing.  | 9      |
| 3.4                         | The specialisations of visiting professors adequately support the programme of study.  | 9      |
| 3.5                         | Special teaching staff and special scientists have the necessary qualifications, adequate work experience and specialisation to teach a limited number of courses in the programme of study.   | 9      |
| 3.6                         | In the programme of study, the ratio of the number of courses taught by full-time staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, to the number of courses taught by part-time staff, ensures the quality of the programme of study. | 10     |
| 3.7                         | The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff supports and safeguards the programme's quality.   | 10     |
| 3.8                         | The teaching load allows for the conduct of research and contribution to society.  | 7      |
| 3.9                         | The programme's coordinator has the qualifications and experience to coordinate the programme of study.  | 8      |
| 3.10                        | The results of the teaching staff's research activity are published in international journals with the peer-reviewing system, in international conferences, conference minutes, publications etc.                                    | 9      |
| 3.11                        | The teaching staff is provided with adequate training opportunities in teaching methods, adult education and new technologies.   | 7      |
| 3.12                        | Feedback processes for teaching staff in regard to the evaluation of their teaching work, by the students, are satisfactory.   | 9      |

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

## Findings

Overall, the teaching staff is adequate both in terms of their number and qualifications. The majority of courses are taught by permanent staff, ensuring the quality and consistency of the program. Nevertheless, partly as an implication of the student to teacher ratio, the teaching load of permanent teaching staff seems to be relatively high and this may impede the conduct of research and contribution to society. When it comes to training in teaching methods for teaching staff, there seems to be room for improvement regarding how to engage students and through teaching methods particularly adapted to online teaching. Although the programme's coordinator is highly qualified and suitable for the coordinating role, the Department may want to consider appointing a coordinator who has marketing expertise.

## Strengths

During the visit, the evaluation committee was informed that the number of students per teaching staff is around 1 to 12, which is a good number. In addition, teaching staff have the necessary qualifications, the working experience and specialization required for this program. Additionally, visiting professors supplement the members of the permanent and local staff with relevant expertise, as they provide additional experience and knowledge.

## Areas of improvement and recommendations

Based on these observations, the Committee has the following recommendations:

1. To reduce the teaching load for permanent teaching staff to enable more focus on research that can in turn be reflected on the programme's content.
2. Given that the institution is developing their online educations, we would recommend that the pedagogic skills and practices of existing and future teaching staff are further developed by additional focus on distant learning training (at the point of recruiting them, but also on an on-going basis) to prepare them for their roles.

Please circle one of the following for: Teaching Staff

*Non-compliant*

*Partially compliant*

*Substantially compliant*

*Fully compliant*

### 4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

#### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*
- *Information on students, like key performance indicators, profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, students' satisfaction*

*with their programmes, learning resources and student support available, career paths of graduates, is collected, monitored and analysed.*

- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*
- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students, as well as students with disabilities).*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Students are involved in evaluating the teaching staff.*
- *Students' mobility is encouraged and supported.*

| Quality indicators/criteria  |  | 1 - 10 |
|--|--|--------|
| 4.1  | The student admission requirements for the programme of study are based on specific regulations and suitable criteria that are favourably compared to international practices. | 9      |
| 4.2  | The award of the higher education qualification is accompanied by the diploma supplement which is in line with European and international standards.                           | N/A    |
| 4.3  | The programme's evaluation mechanism, by the students, is effective.   | 10     |
| 4.4  | Students' participation in exchange programmes is compared favourably to similar programmes across Europe.   | N/A    |
| 4.5  | There is a student welfare service that supports students in regard to academic, personal problems and difficulties.   | 10     |
| 4.6  | Statutory mechanisms, for the support of students and the communication with the teaching staff, are effective.  | 10     |
| 4.7  | Mentoring of each student is provided and the number of students per each permanent teaching member is adequate.   | 10     |
| 4.8  | Flexible options / adaptable to the personal needs or to the needs of students with special needs, are provided.   | 10     |
| 4.9  | Students are satisfied with their learning experiences.  | 9      |
| Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies. |  |        |



## Findings

Overall, the way the university supports the students, including admissions, counselling, teaching, etc., is along the EEC expectations. The Committee had concerns about the admission criteria, which currently are not explicitly specified which may result in subjective judgments. While the library provides a good environment in support of their learning experiences, the opening hours could be extended.

## Strengths

Apart from the remarks addressed above, we were impressed by the student welfare services, including counseling and mentoring, support for student with physical disabilities and dyslexia, for instance. There is also a counseling centre (S.K.E.P.S.I.S) with psychologists in place to support students with various kinds of problems. The ratio of teaching to students make it possible to have regular communication between teaching staff and students. There is also a system (PROSE) in place for the evaluation of the programme.

## Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. To consider extending the opening hours of the library.
2. To clarify and standardize the admission requirements
3. Introduce an online seminar for students about time and stress management, e.g., as an extension to S.K.E.P.S.I.S.

Please circle one of the following for: **Students**

*Non-compliant*

*Partially compliant*

*Substantially compliant*

*Fully compliant*

## 5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

### Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, financial, physical and human support resources\*) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*  
\* *Physical resources: premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, etc.*  
*Human support resources: tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Teaching staff is involved in the management of financial resources regarding the programme of study.*



| Quality indicators/criteria |  | 1 - 10 |
|-----------------------------|--|--------|
| 5.1                         | Adequate and modern learning resources are available to the students.  | 9      |
| 5.2                         | The library includes the latest books and material that support the programme.   | 9      |
| 5.3                         | The library loan system facilitates students' studies.   | 10     |
| 5.4                         | The laboratories adequately support the programme.   | 9      |
| 5.5                         | Student welfare services are of high quality.  | 10     |
| 5.6                         | Statutory administrative mechanisms for monitoring and supporting students are sufficient.   | 8      |
| 5.7                         | Suitable books and reputable journals support the programme of study.  | 9      |
| 5.8                         | An internal communication platform supports the programme of study.  | 10     |
| 5.9                         | The equipment used in teaching and learning (laboratory and electronic equipment, consumables etc.) are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate. | 8      |
| 5.10                        | Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are adequate and accessible to students.                                       | 9      |
| 5.11                        | Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are updated regularly with the most recent publications.                       | 10     |

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

### Findings

The university operates and maintains an extended and updated list of articles and books from major publishers. In addition, the VPN service enable remote access to all university members. As such, the resources offered for the distance learning programme are fully satisfactory, provided also that on-site resources, such as the computer lab or printing equipment are not relevant for the distance learning students.

### Strengths

The library includes all major publishers and there are plans for expanding. This will ensure that the students will have all the necessary literature they need for their studies.

The university has signed exchange/loan agreements with other libraries in both Cyprus and Greece, ensuring that resources that are not currently available can still be reached by students in an efficient manner.

Moodle is a widely-used and stable platform that is appropriate for the distance learning requirements that the university envisions.

The university has the ability to design and develop its own Moodle modules to extend the services provided to the university members.

Teleconference sessions are recorded, archived, and available for distance students. This would allow for more flexibility, even though student should still be encouraged to participate in the active session that would also include the opportunity for direct interaction between other participants and the teacher. So, while the EEC appreciates the recording of teleconference sessions, attention needs to be paid so that the recording will not encourage students to skip active participation.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Despite the positive overall score in this section, the EEC feels that certain improvements can occur:

1. It has been mentioned several times during the visit to the university that the currently small number of the academic community (i.e., student population) and the ability to sustain close connections between students and teachers can help the university address issues related to psychological or pastoral support. However, in the case of distance learning (and considering the new programmes will increase the student population), such support should be better structured and operationalized. For example, the university should take steps to make the services of the S.K.E.P.S.I.S. centre readily and seamlessly available to distance learning students as well.
2. Improvement on resources relevant to qualitative methods could be possible, by extending, for example, the available software with the addition of tools such as nVivo.

Please circle one of the following for: Resources

**Non-compliant**

**Partially compliant**

**Substantially compliant**

**Fully compliant**

### 6. Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)

#### Standards

- ***The distance learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.***
- *A pedagogical planning unit for distance learning, which is responsible for the support of the distance learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *Feedback processes for students in relation to written assignments are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to ensure student interactions with each other, with the teaching staff, and the study material.*
- *Teacher training programmes focusing on interaction and the specificities of distance learning are offered.*

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on distance learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with distance learning methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
  - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *Presentation of course material, on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  - *Weekly outline of set activities and exercises and clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
  - *Synopsis*

| Quality indicators/criteria |  | 1 - 10 |
|-----------------------------|--|--------|
| 6.1                         | The pedagogical planning unit for distance learning supports the distance learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment. | 8      |
| 6.2                         | The institution safeguards the interaction:  |        |
| 6.2.1                       | Among students   | 7      |
| 6.2.2                       | Between students and teaching staff  | 8      |
| 6.2.3                       | Between students and study guides/material of study  | 9      |
| 6.3                         | The process and the conditions for the recruitment of teaching staff ensure that candidates have the necessary skills and experience for distance learning education.                        | 7      |
| 6.4                         | Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff through appropriate procedures.  | 7      |
| 6.5                         | Student performance monitoring mechanisms are satisfactory.  | 8      |
| 6.6                         | Adequate mentoring by the teaching staff is provided to students through established procedures.   | 9      |

|      |  |    |
|------|--|----|
| 6.7  | The unimpeded distance learning communication between the teaching staff and the students is ensured.  | 9  |
| 6.8  | Assessment consistency is ensured.   | 9  |
| 6.9  | Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) comply with the requirements provided by the distance learning education methodology and are updated regularly.                      | 8  |
| 6.10 | The programme of study has the appropriate and adequate infrastructure for the support of distance learning.   | 9  |
| 6.11 | The supporting infrastructures are easily accessible.  | 9  |
| 6.12 | Students are informed and trained with regards to the available educational infrastructure.  | 8  |
| 6.13 | Procedures for systematic control and improvement of the supportive services are set.  | 9  |
| 6.14 | Infrastructure for distance education is comparable to corresponding university infrastructure in the European Union and internationally.  | 9  |
| 6.15 | Electronic library services are provided according to international practice in order to support the needs of the students and the teaching staff.   | 9  |
| 6.16 | The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary electronic sources of information, relevant to the programme, the level, and the method of teaching.                                    | 9  |
| 6.17 | Students' weekly assignments are appropriate for the level of the programme.   | 7  |
| 6.18 | Feedback on students' assignments is regular through concrete and published procedures.  | 7  |
| 6.19 | The quality of students' final exams is ensured and evidenced.   | 10 |
| 6.20 | The teaching e-learning material has been sufficiently enriched with electronic sources, updated research publications and other electronic learning resources that support students' work and learning. | 8  |

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

### Findings

Overall, the nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery in different universities. Neapolis University has addressed adequately several aspects of distance learning delivery regarding resource validity and availability, teaching delivery methods, assessment processes, and programme administration.

However, there are also areas that require according to the views of this committee, that the university needs to improve. These areas include: teacher training for distance learning, clear and structure feedback processes for the students, and a clear and pedagogical sound approach to engage students in online activities.

### Strengths

A certain strength is the ratio between teaching staff and online students. The university has a limit of 30 students per teaching staff (i.e., course responsible and associated teaching staff). This is an excellent practice since it allows students to receive timely feedback and support from teaching staff throughout the semester.

The learning platform (Moodle and its modules) can offer high quality online learning. It is also commendable that the university is able to design and produce its own Moodle modules that can better address its needs.

Contracting an external company to support further the Moodle administration and operation is also a strength.

Courses include bi-weekly activities that could engage students in learning activities. This can be related to continuous assessment, even though it seems that most (if not all) of these activities are optional.

Students' examination procedures are clear and coherent and the university follows standards that are applied in established open universities (e.g., Hellenic Open University, Cyprus Open University).

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The basic concern the EEC had was to ensure that the pedagogy behind the distance learning programme would be appropriate. Transferring a conventional course into an online course requires much more than making the material available online. Special learning design needs are expected to be applied to make the students engaged and able to interact and collaborate with each other.

Based on the above, the EEC has the following suggestions for improvement:

1. Teaching in a class and teaching online requires a different set of skills. As such, regular and formal teacher training sessions should be organized to educate the new teaching staff in online pedagogies and inform the current teaching staff on new educational technologies. This goes beyond the technical manuals that exist on the Moodle platform. The teaching staff should have the opportunity to be educated/trained on collaborative learning, inquiry learning, and educational technology.
2. It would also be an incentive for the teaching staff to receive a certificate of completion for the teacher training course in online education. In general, certificates on teacher training are established in several universities as an opportunity for professional development for the teaching staff. These certificates can also be taken into account during teaching staff evaluation.

3. Teaching abilities for online education are not explicitly mentioned during the recruitment process. Once again, the EEC would like to stress that distance education requires the application of different pedagogies than the ones typically applied in a classroom. A teacher with no prior training or distance education experience may have difficulties in designing and supporting distance learning.
4. There is no concrete strategy or learning design that would ensure student engagement in the online activities. Peer collaboration should be presented as a necessary skill and the collaboration itself must be meaningful for the students. For example, an assignment that could be completed by a single student is not appropriate for groupwork. This comment refers back to the need for teacher training and pedagogy support for the teaching staff. Based on the expected audience (mature audience that pays tuition), the EEC recognizes that the expected dropout rate is much lower than other distance learning formats (e.g., open courses, MOOCs, etc.). However, it seems that student motivation is not adequately considered in the learning design. For example, it was not clear when and how a student is identified as disengaged. Monitoring students' online patterns and direct and regular teacher-student interaction could assist on this task.
5. Especially for collaborative activities online, students should be guided and scaffolding, not only on the technical aspects, but also on what it is expected of them. This means that learning resources that are made available to students should also include guides and examples of efficient collaboration. Self-management, self-organization, peer interaction, and role-identification and assumption may not happen spontaneously, especially amongst students that have not been taught how to work together. Since collaboration skills are essential for any professional, the learning material should include these kinds or resources. Especially since the collaborating students are going to work online.
6. Some of the weekly assignments examined appear to be easy or of a lower complexity and will not be adequate to engage students in deeper reflection.
7. The procedure for providing feedback on students' assignments is not published.

**Please circle one of the following for: Additional for distance learning programmes**

*Non-compliant*

*Partially compliant*

*Substantially compliant*

*Fully compliant*



## 7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

### Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
  - *the examinations*
  - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
  - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*
- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
  - *the chapters that are contained*
  - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
  - *the minimum word limit*
  - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*
  - *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - *support for writing research papers*
  - *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

| Quality indicators/criteria |  | 1 - 10 |
|-----------------------------|--|--------|
| 7.1                         | The provision of quality doctoral studies is ensured through doctoral studies regulations, which are publicly available.                       | N/A    |
| 7.2                         | The structure and the content of a doctoral programme of study ensure the quality provision of doctoral studies.                               | N/A    |
| 7.3                         | The doctoral studies' supervisors have the necessary academic qualifications and experience for the supervision of the specific dissertations. | N/A    |

|   |  |     |
|---|--|-----|
| 7.4   | The number of doctoral students, under the supervision of a member of the teaching staff, enables continuous and effective feedback to the students and it complies with the European and international standards. | N/A |
| 7.5   | The research interests of academic advisors and supervisors adequately cover the thematic areas of research conducted by the doctoral students of the programme.   | N/A |
| 7.6   | Research equipment, laboratories, workshops and existing bibliographic material support the programme of study.  | N/A |
| 7.7   | The quality of the doctoral theses of the programme in this field is in line with international standards.   | N/A |
| 7.8   | Doctoral candidates have publications in scientific journals and/ or participate in international conferences.   | N/A |
| 7.9   | The institution has mechanisms and funds to support writing and attending conferences of doctoral candidates.  | N/A |
| 7.10  | The candidates demonstrate skills in designing and in conducting productive self-directed research.  | N/A |
| 7.11  | Candidates are aware of the ethical implications of their research and of their responsibilities as scientists.  | N/A |
| 7.12  | Suitable procedures of monitoring and periodic assessment of students' research progress are set.  | N/A |
| 7.13  | There is a clear policy on authorship and intellectual property.   | N/A |
| <p>Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.</p> <p>This was not a doctoral programme.</p> |  |     |

Please circle one of the following for: Additional for doctoral programmes **N/A**

*Non-compliant*

*Partially compliant*

*Substantially compliant*

*Fully compliant*

## 8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

### Standards

- *The joint programme is offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems.*
- *The partner universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes.*
- *The joint programme is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design, delivery and further development of the programme.*
- *The terms and conditions of the joint programme are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:*
  - *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
  - *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, including funding, sharing of costs and income, resources for mobility of staff and students*
  - *Admission and selection procedures for students*
  - *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
  - *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*
  - *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*
- *Aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated, including a joint syllabus, language policy, as well as an account of the intended added value of the programme.*
- *Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.*

| Quality indicators/criteria |  | 1 - 10 |
|-----------------------------|--|--------|
| 8.1                         | The joint study programme promotes the fulfilment of the mission and achievement of the goals of the partner universities.   | N/A    |
| 8.2                         | The joint study programme has been developed by all the partner universities, which are also involved in its further development.  | N/A    |
| 8.3                         | The partner universities have defined the responsibility of the parties in the common agreement.   | N/A    |
| 8.4                         | The joint study programme conforms to the requirements and directions of national and international legislation.   | N/A    |
| 8.5                         | The joint study programme is based on the needs of the target group and of the labour market.  | N/A    |
| 8.6                         | Students are provided with advisory and support systems concerning learning and teaching at the partner universities.  | N/A    |
| 8.7                         | The cooperation contract sets out the procedure for resolving disputes concerning the execution of the joint study programme, which ensures the protection of the rights of students and teaching staff. | N/A    |

|      |  |   |     |
|------|--|---|-----|
| 8.8  | The partner universities have agreed on how to seek feedback from students regarding the organisation and process of their study.                        |   | N/A |
| 8.9  | The partner universities ensure the economic sustainability of the joint study programme.  |   | N/A |
| 8.10 | The degree awarded is justified by:  |   | N/A |
|      | 8.10.1   | The learning outcomes   | N/A |
|      | 8.10.2   | The collaboration between/among the institutions delivering the programme | N/A |
| 8.11 | The jointness of the programme development is effective.   |   | N/A |
| 8.12 | The students' mobility between/among the collaborative institutions provide students with rewarding experiences that facilitate employability in Europe. |   | N/A |

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

This was not a joint programme.

Please circle one of the following for: Additional for joint programmes N/A

*Non-compliant*    *Partially compliant*    *Substantially compliant*    *Fully compliant*

## Conclusions and final remarks

Neapolis University has a track record of providing distant learning online. The EEC feels that the University and its staff have the necessary experience and expertise to expand on this front and add new programmes to its portfolio. The MSc in Digital Marketing (Distant Learning) can be a valuable addition. The existing resources and processes ensure the smooth delivery of new programmes. Still the objectives, learning outcomes and courses will need to be carefully considered and the necessary changes made first. The EEC would like to thank the University for its cooperation and wish the teaching team all the success with this programme.

## C. Signatures of the EEC

| <i>Name</i>           | <i>Signature</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Fredrik Nordin        |                  |
| Niki Panteli          |                  |
| Pantelis Papadopoulos |                  |
| Savvas Papagiannidis  |                  |
| Giorgios Longinos     |                  |

Date: 29/05/2019