

Self-assessment report of ENQA Agency Reviews

CYQAA

Second ENQA Review

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction.....	4
2.	Development of the self-assessment report (SAR).....	6
2.1	Survey amongst institutions of higher education:.....	7
2.2	Formal Meetings	7
2.3	Meetings of the Committee for Education and Culture of the House of Representatives.	7
2.4	Official Correspondence.....	8
3.	Higher education and QA of higher education in the context of the agency.....	9
3.1	Higher education in Cyprus	9
3.2	Mapping of students in HEI in Cyprus.....	11
3.3	Quality Assurance in Higher Education	14
4.	History, profile and activities of the agency	19
4.1	History.....	19
4.2	Governance	20
4.2	Activities.....	21
5.	Profile, functioning and (EQA) activities of the agency (compliance with Part 3 of the ESG).....	25
5.1	ESG Standard 3.1 Activities, policy, and processes for quality assurance.	26
5.2	ESG Standard 3.2 Official status	35
5.3	ESG Standard 3.3 Independence.....	37
5.4	ESG Standard 3.4 Thematic analysis	40
5.5	ESG Standard 3.5 Resources.....	43
5.6	ESG Standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct.....	47
5.7	ESG Standard 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies	52
6.	Design and implementation of the agency's EQA activities (compliance with Part 2 of the ESG)	53
6.1	ESG Standard 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance	53
6.2	ESG Standard 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose	61
6.3	ESG Standard 2.3 Implementing processes.....	64
6.4	ESG Standard 2.4 Peer-review experts.....	67
6.5	ESG Standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes.....	71
6.6	ESG Standard 2.6 Reporting	74
6.7	ESG Standard 2.7 Complaints and appeals.....	77

7. Opinions of stakeholders.....	83
7.1 Stakeholders.....	83
7.2 Communication with Stakeholders	84
7.3 Surveys.....	88
8. Recommendations and main findings from previous review(s) and agency's resulting follow-up (for second and subsequent reviews only).....	94
8.1 ENQA Recommendation - ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance	94
8.2 ENQA Recommendation - ESG 3.3 Official status	95
8.3 ENQA Recommendation - ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis	97
8.4 ENQA Recommendation - ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct.....	99
8.5 ENQA Recommendation - ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance	100
8.6 ENQA Recommendation - ESG 2.3 Implementing processes.....	102
8.7 ENQA Recommendation - ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts	105
8.8 ENQA Recommendation - ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes.....	107
8.9 ENQA Recommendation – ESG 2.6 Reporting	109
8.10 ENQA Recommendation - ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals.....	111
8. SWOT analysis	115
9. Key challenges and areas for future development	119
GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	121
ANNEXES.....	130

1. INTRODUCTION

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), registered on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), and is fully recognized by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME).

CYQAA was established in November 2016 on the basis of “The Quality Assurance and Accreditation in 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].”¹

CYQAA’s vision is to develop and sustain a quality culture among institutions of higher education (HEIs), stakeholders, and society, and to enable them to work toward the improvement of their programs of study and institutional structures, within the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG), the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Lisbon Convention.

HE in Cyprus is currently provided by 3 public and 9 private universities and 6 public and 45 private institutions of HE (non-university). The total number of students according to data collected by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in 2020-2021 was 54,235. The National Qualification’s Framework provides for a degree structure aligned to the European Qualification’s Framework structure for HE corresponding to short cycle programs (level 5), four-year programs leading to a bachelor’s degree (level 6), postgraduate education leading to a Master’s degree (level 7) and postgraduate education leading to a Doctorate (level 8).

CYQAA works closely with HEIs in Cyprus toward advancing higher education in the country, based on knowledge, research, and innovation. Together with its stakeholders, CYQAA aims to enable HEIs to become

¹ https://www.dipae.ac.cy/archeia/nomothesia/nomothesia_2015_agency_quality_assurance_en.pdf

centers of excellence in education, innovation and cutting-edge research, so that Cyprus becomes scientifically, technologically, financially, socially, and culturally more advanced. Within this framework, the development of scientists with ethical and professional skills, with innovative and creative thinking, and advanced research skills will match the current and future needs of society.

These priorities are fully aligned with CYQAA's strategic plan which delineates the goals and priorities for the Agency's further development by the year 2025.²

Committed primarily to serving HEIs and students and supporting the Government's goal for Cyprus' establishment as a regional and global center of excellence in HE, CYQAA undergoes its second review, which will serve for the renewal of its ENQA membership and renewal of its registration in EQAR.

CYQAA values its ENQA membership as it enhances the Agency's involvement in policy-making, provides access to information and expertise as well as the opportunity for networking, and supports the exchange of good practices for professional development at European level. ENQA membership and EQAR registration has provided the CYQAA with international visibility.

² https://dipae.ac.cy/archeia/StrategicPlan/Strategic_plan_2020_2025_en.pdf

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)

For the writing of the present Self-Evaluation Report (SAR) a working group was appointed by the CYQAA Council. The working group comprised of the Chair and two Members of the Council, the Agency's Higher Administrative Officer, who coordinated the project at Agency personnel level, and 2 Education Officers.

It is noted that all officers of the Agency (the Agency's Higher Administrative Officer and 9 Education Officers) were involved for the writing of the first draft. Individual chapters were allocated taking into consideration the areas of expertise of each officer and the tasks they carry out on a day-to-day basis.

General information on the purpose of the application for ENQA membership, registration on EQAR, and the SAR process has been presented to all CYQAA staff during the working group meetings took place for planning and coordination of the project. Additional meetings of the working group, chaired by the President of the Council, also took place in regard to the progress made and for guidance. The Council was also briefed on the progress made through presentations and/or through memos and provided feedback.

CYQAA followed a specific timeline for the drafting of the SAR:

- February 2022 – Confirmation with ENQA in regard to the template
- October 2022 – Confirmation with ENQA in regard to the key dates for the Second External Review
- September 2022 – Appointment of the working group and allocation of tasks
- October 2022 – Stakeholder involvement via a survey
- November 2022 – Official letter sent to ENQA President to request the Agency's Second External Review
- December 2022 – First draft of SAR chapters submitted by CYQAA officers
- January 2023 – April 2023 further processing of the SAR's draft and incorporation of data analysis
- May 2023 – Further processing of the SAR's draft by the working group
- June 2023 – Submission to ENQA

Stakeholders were involved in the process through the following:

2.1 SURVEY AMONGST INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

A questionnaire³, under the title *Higher Education Institutions' Feedback on the Implementation of Part 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (2015)* was sent out in October 2022. It was developed within the framework of CYQAA's effort to actively involve HEIs in the process of continuous upgrading of quality assurance and accreditation of higher education in general, and the Agency's internal quality, in particular. It examined HEIs' opinions and degree of satisfaction on all standards of Part 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA – ESG 2015. Amongst others, the questionnaire asked participants in the survey to indicate their degree of satisfaction with CYQAA's external evaluation processes and methodology, the criteria utilized, and their involvement in quality assurance. The questionnaire also examined HEIs' trust in the national quality assurance system and its implementation by CYQAA with regards to its objectivity, reliability, transparency, consistency, etc. A total of 25 HEIs, responded. The survey shed new light on the effectiveness and fitness-for-purpose of CYQAA's processes. The results are analyzed in Chapter 5 of the SAR and in ANNEX I.

2.2 FORMAL MEETINGS

The Chair of the CYQAA Council, within the framework of the Agency's competencies, within the five-year period since the first ENQA review, had meetings with various stakeholders including, representatives of HEIs, student representatives, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, KYSATS etc. The various meetings have provided perspectives and feedback for the drafting of the SAR.

2.3 MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

CYQAA is officially invited and is officially represented to all meetings of the Committee for Education and Culture of the House of Representatives during discussions related to higher education. The formal discussions during these meetings, within the five-year period since the first ENQA review, as well as the final decisions have provided perspectives and feedback have contributed to the drafting of the SAR.

³ [Higher Education Institutions' Feedback on the Implementation of Part 3 of the European Standards and Guidelines \(2015\) \(dipae.ac.cy\)](https://dipae.ac.cy/Higher-Education-Institutions-Feedback-on-the-Implementation-of-Part-3-of-the-European-Standards-and-Guidelines-2015)

2.4 OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Moreover, for the drafting of the SAR, feedback from stakeholders archived as official correspondence, within the five-year period since the first ENQA review, was available to the work team, and was used in a constructive manner.

The SAR draws on various sources and documents which include the following:

- ENQA Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG 2015
- 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]
- EQAR's confirmation that CYQAA's application for inclusion on the register is eligible (May 2023)
- CYQAA's Terms of Reference – ToR (April 2023)
- CYQAA's Annual Activity Reports
- Council Policy Decisions published on the Agency's website
- Documents, forms, and templates for external evaluation published on the Agency's website
- Mapping of Educational Field of Higher and Higher Education for the Academic Year 2021-2022 – MOEC
- The European Higher Education Area – 2018

3. HIGHER EDUCATION AND QA OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AGENCY

3.1 HIGHER EDUCATION IN CYPRUS

Higher education in Cyprus is aligned with the key commitments that underpin the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): implementation of the three-cycle degree structure, recognition of qualifications, and quality assurance. The main Bologna tools – ECTS, Diploma Supplement, and the national qualifications framework – are also implemented in Cyprus.

Higher Education is offered by public and private universities as well as public and private HEIs at non-university level. HE in Cyprus is provided by 3 public and 9 private universities and 6 public and 45 private institutions of HE (non-university).

Table 1: Number of Higher Education Institutions in Cyprus according to category

Type	Number
Public Universities	3
Private Universities	9
Public Institutions of higher education (non-university)	6
Private Institutions of higher education (non-university)	45

3.1.1 Public Universities

Public Universities, namely the University of Cyprus, the Open University of Cyprus and the Cyprus University of Technology are autonomous and are funded by the government. Public Universities are governed, by their respective Laws⁴.

For undergraduate studies at public universities candidate students are required to take the competitive entrance examinations, which are organized and administered by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth at the end of each school year. For postgraduate programs of study students are selected on a competitive basis. The Open University of Cyprus accepts students on a competitive basis through ranking of each applicant's qualifications. Entrance criteria for each program of study, are under scrutiny during external evaluations conducted by CYQAA.

3.1.2. Private Universities

Private universities are autonomous and they are privately funded. Their establishment and operation is regulated by legislation which besides their establishment and operation it provides for their quality assurance.⁵

Candidate students are selected on a competitive basis. Entrance criteria for each program of study, are under scrutiny during external evaluations conducted by CYQAA.

3.1.3 Non-university Public Institutions of Higher Education

Non-university Public HEIs that operate in Cyprus are established under the Institutions of Tertiary Education Law of 1996 (N. 67(I)/1996) and its amendments and operate under the administrative jurisdiction of their associated Ministries. The Public Institutions of higher Education offer Short-Term Programs of Study (1, 2,

⁴ http://www.cyLaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/1989_I_144/full.html

http://www.cyLaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/2002_I_234/full.html

http://www.cyLaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/2003_I_198/full.html

⁵ http://www.cyLaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/2005_I_109/full.html

and 3 years of study) with the exception of the Mediterranean Institute of Management (MIM) that offers postgraduate programs of studies (Masters level). The academic programs of Public Institutions of Higher Education are evaluated and accredited by CYQAA.

For undergraduate studies at non-university public HEIs candidate students are required to take the competitive entrance examinations, which are organized and administered by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth at the end of each school year. For postgraduate programs of study students are selected on a competitive basis. Entrance criteria for each program of study, are under scrutiny during external evaluations conducted by CYQAA.

3.1.4 Non-University Private Institutions of Higher Education

There are 45 registered Private Institutions of Higher Education in Cyprus that are established under the Institutions of Tertiary Education Law of 1996 (N. 67(I)/1996) and its amendments. They offer academic and professional undergraduate and postgraduate study programs, as well as short-cycle study programs. The short-cycle study programs lead to the acquisition of: Certificate (one-year study), Diploma (two-year study) and Higher Diploma (three-year study). All study programs offered by the Private Institutions of Higher Education are evaluated and accredited by the CYQAA.

Candidate students are selected on a competitive basis. Entrance criteria for each program of study, are under scrutiny during external evaluations conducted by CYQAA.

HEIs are autonomous concerning the content and the structure of their programs, their curricula and forms of instruction, granted that these comply with the ESG and the quality standards and indicators (criteria) set by CYQAA.

3.2 MAPPING OF STUDENTS IN HEI IN CYPRUS

The latest available statistics published by the Department of Higher Education (DHE) of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth refer to the academic year 2020-2021.⁶ According to these data, the total number

⁶ https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/mc/916/chartografisi_2020_2021.pdf

of students attending HEI in Cyprus for the academic year 2020-2021 was 54,235, out of which 42,519 (78%) attended universities and 11,716 (22%) attended non university (45 non university HEIs are private).

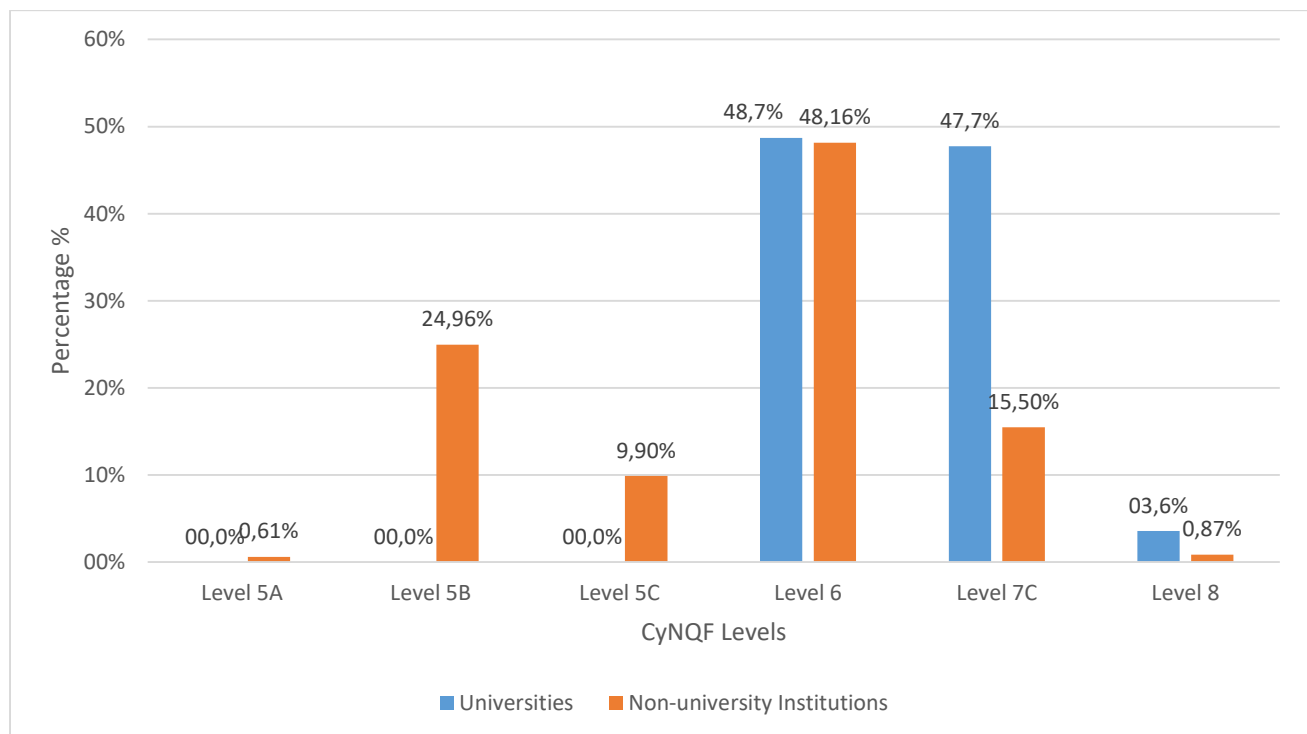
As for the demographic characteristics of students attending higher education in Cyprus, 46% were men and 54% women. The students' country of origin is separated in three categories: Cyprus, EU countries and non-EU countries. On the basis of collected data for the academic year 2020-2021, 44% students were Cypriot citizens, 40% were EU citizens and 16% were non-EU citizens.

Table 2: Student distribution at Institutions of Higher Education (university and non-university) in Cyprus in relation to institution type, gender, and country of origin (academic year 2020-2021)

Total Number of students	Students attending Universities	Students attending Non-University HEI	Male	Female	Cypriot	EU Citizen	Non-EU citizen
54,235	42,519 (78%)	11,716 (22%)	46%	54%	44%	40%	16%

In relation to the level of study, the majority of students, in Cyprus, attended programs of study at level 6 of the CyQF (University degrees). A significant percentage (41%) attended programs of study at level 7 (postgraduate) of the CyQF. At Universities, the majority of students attended programs of study at level 6 (49%) and level 7 (48%), while the majority of students at non-university HEIs attended programs of study at level 6 (48%) and level 5 (35%).

Figure 1: Student distribution at Institutions of Higher Education (university and non-university) in Cyprus, in relation to the level of study (academic year 2020-2021)



As far as the field of study is concerned, the majority of university students attended programs of study in the fields of Business Administration and Law (28%), Education (24%), and Medical Studies (15%). At the Institutions of Higher Education (non-university), the majority of students attended programmes of study in the fields of Business Administration and Law (64%), Services (19%), and Engineering (6%).

In relation to the country of origin, a significant percentage (68%) of students with disabilities were from Cyprus and a big percentage were from EU countries (30%). In relation to the educational variables, the majority of students with disabilities attended Private Universities (63%) on a full time basis (79%) in programs of study at level 6 (86%) and in programs of study in person (88%). In relation to the field of study, a significant percentage of students with disabilities was in the fields of Business Administration and Law (23%) and Medical Studies (21%), while a lower percentage of students with disabilities was in the fields of study of Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics and Services (3%).

As far as the newcomer students in programs of study HE, data were collected regarding only students at Universities. In total, 22,369 students (53%) started their studies in the academic year 2020-2021. In relation with the demographic characteristics, 35% were men and 65% were women, while in relation to the country of origin, the majority (61%) come from EU countries, and a significant percentage (31%) come from Cyprus.

In relation to the variables regarding newcomer attendance, the majority (80%) started their studies at Private Universities and only 20% at Public Universities. Also, a significant percentage of them chose programs of study on a full time basis (77%) and online programs of study (60%). In relation to the level of studies, the majority of students (65%) started their program of study at level 7c, a percentage of 33% started their program of study at level 6 and a small percentage of 2% started their program of study at level 8. The choices of Newcomer students in relation to the field of study were in the fields of Education (31%), Business Administration and Law (28%), and Medical Studies (11%).

3.3 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

CYQAA is responsible to ensure the quality of HE in Cyprus, and to support through the procedures provided by the relevant legislation, for the continuous improvement and upgrading of HEIs and their programs of study. One of the primary aims of CYQAA is to provide those conditions necessary for the creation of a quality driven culture.

The relevant legislation provides for the main areas of CYQAA's responsibilities / activities, which are within the scope of the ESG:

Table 3: Activities, within the scope of the ESG

1.	Institutional evaluation – accreditation	Compulsory for all HEIs, taking place every five years
2.	Departmental Evaluation – accreditation	Compulsory evaluation for all departments at universities. It takes place every five-years. In some cases there is a concurrent evaluation of study program

		within the department carried out together with the Departmental Evaluation.
3.	Program evaluation – accreditation	Compulsory for all programs of study offered by HEIs. It takes place every five-years. For PhD programs additional areas of assessment are included i.e. selection criteria and requirements, proposal and dissertation
4.	Joint program evaluation – accreditation	Compulsory for all joint programs of study. It takes place every five-years. European Approach available under specific conditions
5.	Evaluation – accreditation of cross border education, offered by local institutions in member states or in third party countries (including e-learning programs of study and franchise programs of study)	Compulsory for all programs of study offered by HEIs. It takes place every five-years. For PhD programs additional areas of assessment are included i.e. selection criteria and requirements, proposal and dissertation. Additional criteria are also applied for distance learning programs of study

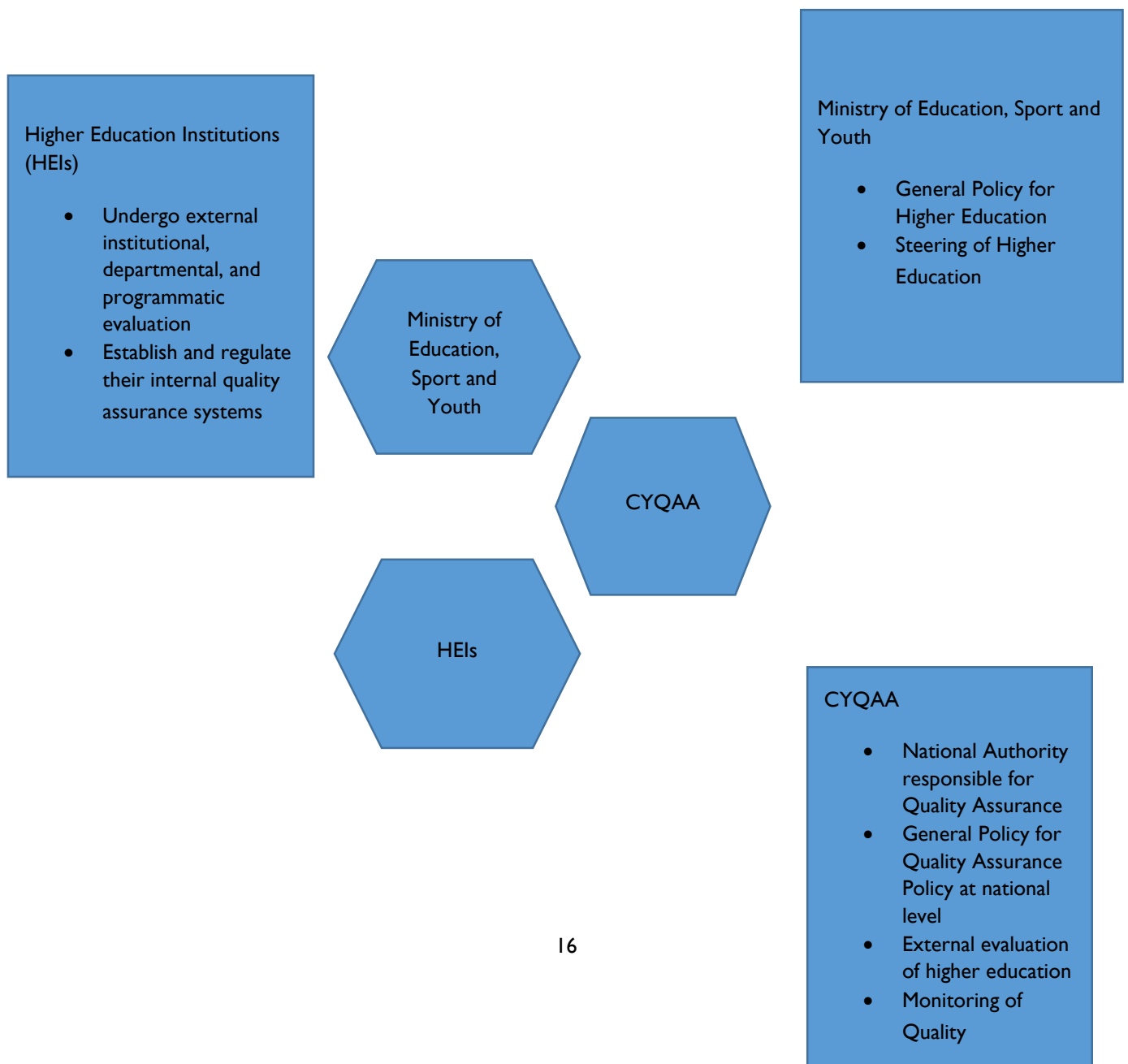
In the present SAR, each standard of the ESG (Part 2) is addressed individually for each of the aforementioned activities. It is noted that procedures are the same for activities 1- 5, and in this SAR, this will be stated explicitly at the relevant chapters.

HEIs (public and private at university and non-university level) undergo external evaluation, both at programme and institutional and department level. Local higher education institutions are also required to accredit their transnational provision (cross-border higher education) in member states or third-party countries. External Quality Assurance is governed by the provisions of “The Quality Assurance and

Accreditation in Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Law, of 2015” and its subsequent amendments.

HEIs have a legal obligation to submit their new programs of study for external evaluation. Once a program of study is accredited, external evaluation is repeated after a period of five years. Additionally, institutions are obliged to undergo external evaluation of their operations and quality system—Departmental and Institutional evaluation—periodically every five years.

Figure 2: The Cyprus national QA system in HE



The Ministry of Education Sport and Youth is the competent authority responsible for the general policy for higher education, and simultaneously, it steers higher education through national strategy for and through legislation. Cyprus has its national qualifications framework (NQF) which corresponds to the EQF. All HEIs at university and non-university level, comply to the NQF and EQF.

Table 4: National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education⁷

THE CYPRUS QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK			
NQF LEVELS	EDUCATIONAL/ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	Occupational/Vocational Qualifications	EQF LEVELS
8	DOCTORAL DEGREE		8
7c	MASTER'S DEGREE		7
7b	POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA		
7a	POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATES		
6	UNIVERSITY DEGREE (PTYCHION/BACHELOR'S DEGREE)	SVQ <u>Level 6</u>	6

⁷ <https://www.cyqf.gov.cy/index.php/en/>

5c	HIGHER CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS (3 years or more)	SVQ <u>Level 5</u>	5
5b	POST SECONDARY CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS (2 years)		
5a	POST SECONDARY CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS (1 year)		

CYQAA took the initiative to propose amendments to the framework which are consistent with the programs of study the Agency externally evaluates and accredits. It is proposed that the existing national Cypriot Qualifications Framework (CyQF/NQF) be adapted to recognise single integrated awards, that are recognised as professional qualifications and enable registration in professional bodies, as end-cycle NQF level 7 awards. At the time of the NQF's establishment these awards were not part of the Cyprus HE system. CYQAA has suggested that all stakeholders should be involved in the dialogue for the NQF's update.

4. HISTORY, PROFILE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY

4.1 HISTORY

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) was established with the enactment of the relevant Law on 2 November 2015 [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021]. CYQAA is an independent authority responsible to ensure the quality of Higher Education in Cyprus and to support, through the procedures provided by the relevant legislation for the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programs of study.

The Agency assumed the responsibilities of three quality assurance bodies which were previously operating in Cyprus: The Council of Educational Evaluation-Accreditation (SEKAP), the Advisory Committee on Higher Education (SETE), and the Evaluation Committee for Private Universities (ECPU).

The new Law radically changed the quality assurance landscape in Cyprus, since it provided for the establishment of an independent agency operating in accordance to the ESG. CYQAA's quality assurance decisions are final and need not be ratified by the Minister of Education as was the case with CYQAA's predecessors.

The new Law provides for external evaluation with the implementation of transparent external evaluation procedures, which are the same for all types of HEIs. The most significant improvements provided for by the new legislative framework are:

- The legal obligation for HEIs (public and private at university and non-university level), for external evaluation, both programmatic and institutional
- The legal obligation of universities for the external evaluation of their departments
- The compliance of the external evaluation standards and indicators with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG)
- The compulsory evaluation and accreditation of cross-border education, offered by local institutions in member states or third-party countries

- Examination of the prerequisites for the provision, by foreign institutions, of cross-border education in Cyprus

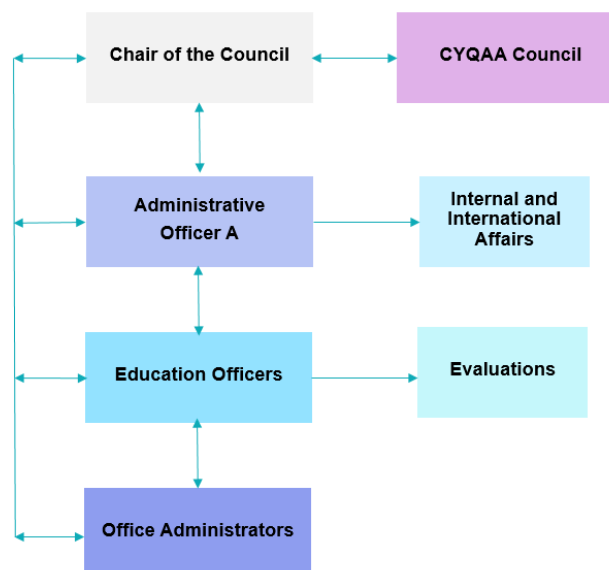
4.2 GOVERNANCE

An eleven-member Council, including its President and Vice-President, govern the Agency. According to the Law [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021], eight (8) members of the Council are academics at the rank of Professor or Professor Emeritus, with a professional record on higher education administration and quality assurance and accreditation. Two (2) members of the Council represent professional associations and one (1) member is an undergraduate student representative. Student representatives may serve in the Council for two (2) years only, whereas all other members serve for a five-year term.

All members of the CYQAA Council operate independently and impartially, aiming to promote the quality assurance of higher education in Cyprus.

CYQAA's personnel consists of one (1) Higher Administrative Officer, who is the Agency's coordinator, two (2) Administrative Assistants, and eight (9) Education Officers.

Figure 3: Organization Chart



4.2 ACTIVITIES

4.2.1 Activities within the scope of the ESG

The relevant legislation provides for the main areas of CYQAA's responsibilities / activities, which are within the scope of the ESG:

Table 5: Activities within the scope of the ESG

1.	Institutional evaluation – accreditation	Compulsory for all HEIs, taking place every five years
2.	Departmental Evaluation – accreditation	Compulsory evaluation for all departments at universities. It takes place every five-years. In some cases there is a concurrent evaluation of study program within the department carried out together with the Departmental Evaluation.
3.	Program evaluation – accreditation	Compulsory for all programs of study offered by HEIs. It takes place every five-years. For PhD programs additional areas of assessment are included i.e. selection criteria and requirements, proposal and dissertation
4.	Joint program evaluation – accreditation	Compulsory for all joint programs of study. It takes place every five-years. European Approach available under specific conditions
5.	Evaluation – accreditation of cross border education, offered by local institutions in member states or in third party countries	Compulsory for all programs of study offered by HEIs. It takes place every five-years. For PhD programs additional areas of assessment are included i.e. selection criteria and requirements, proposal and

	(including e-learning programs of study and franchise programs of study)	dissertation. Additional criteria are also applied for distance learning programs of study
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4.2.2 Further activities for a quality culture in HE

The Agency plays a crucial role in establishing and sustaining a culture of quality assurance. Within this approach, the Agency promotes and applies core values such as independence, integrity, transparency, synergy, trustworthiness and professionalism, all of which the Agency cares to pass on to higher education institutions in Cyprus through the activities described in detail in sections 4.2.2.2, 4.2.2.3, and 4.2.2.4.

4.2.2.2 Guidance and Transparency

The Agency aims, as one of its principal priorities since its inception, to keep higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders fully informed of and involved in the goals and processes of quality assurance and accreditation. The Agency makes all of its quality policy statements available through its website, upon which HEIs are informed and expected to comply, on matters having to do with their mission, policies for quality assurance, teaching methodologies, various synergies, teaching and other staff, student assessment, learning resources and student support, internationalization and upgrading of their programs of study.

4.2.2.3 Stakeholder involvement

Furthermore, the Agency actively involves HEIs and other stakeholders (i.e. Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS)⁸, various professional bodies) in its external audits, aiming to disseminate information on policies and processes followed, to increase transparency and to cultivate mutual trust between CYQAA and HEIs, for further upgrading of the quality of HEIs and their programs of study.

⁸ KYSATS is the competent authority of the Republic of Cyprus for the recognition of higher education qualifications, awarded by recognized institutions of higher education or by evaluated-accredited study programs by the competent authorities of the country they operate or offered in.

In order to make this active involvement feasible and successful, and to ensure that communication channels are open both ways, the Agency takes a number of actions: (1) provision of updated information through the Internet (CYQAA's website and various social media), (2) organisation of seminars/webinars and conferences, (3) scheduled meetings with people leading higher education institutions and their associations, (4) distribution of feedback questionnaires, (5) scheduled meetings with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and (6) informal meetings with other stakeholders (students, academic personnel, representatives of institutions and organizations).

4.2.2.4 Continuous Training of All Stakeholders involved

The Agency, operating within the provisions of its legal framework, promotes professional development opportunities to (a) members of external evaluation committees (academics, students, members of professional bodies), (b) administrative and academic members of higher education institutions, and (c) members of the Agency's personnel. Professional development topics vary from technical ones (correctly completing various paperwork), to more substantive ones (shared knowledge and understanding of the criteria for external evaluation, of the evaluator's role, of issues that may arise during the external evaluation, and of what constitutes quality upgrading of the higher education programs of study).

Through the above and other relevant actions, CYQAA contributes to the creation of a quality driven culture, through which HEIs are enabled to enhance their quality assurance procedures and mechanisms. The collaboration of the institutions with the Agency is satisfactory and the construction of an ethos of trust and mutual respect has been established.

4.2.3 International Presence, Memberships and Activities

Within the seven (7) years since its establishment, through its standardised procedures, professional approach, transparency, accountability, and ethos, CYQAA managed to be fully trusted by all relevant stakeholders in higher education in particular and society in general.

CYQAA's international recognition and accreditation has played a crucial role in trust building. Today, CYQAA is,

- Recognized by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)
- Included on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)
- Member of European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA)
- Full member of International Network for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Higher Education (INQAAHE)
- Affiliate member of European University Association (EUA)
- Full member of the European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN)

CYQAA actively participated and contributed to ENQA's working group on micro-credentials which was responsible to develop guidelines encompassing crucial considerations for assuring the quality of micro-credentials.

CYQAA is the authorized National IMI System Coordinator. According to Directive 2005/36/ EC as amended by Directive 2013/55/ EU [article 21 (a) (3)], each Member State must notify the European Commission of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions it lays down for the award of academic qualifications covered by the automated system recognition ((Medical Doctor, Dentist, Nurse, Midwife, Veterinarian, Pharmacist, Architect). Notifications should be submitted in a timely manner to ensure that graduates of Higher Education Institutions benefit from the provisions of the Directive. The following procedure has been agreed upon by the stakeholders (Higher Education Institutions, Registration Councils, Competent Ministries, Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education) at the meeting held on 15 March 2017 at the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism.

According to the goals included in its strategic planning CYQAA has joined networks in preparing and submitting proposals for European research grants in areas relevant to promoting quality in HE such as the ERASMUS-EDU-2023-PI-ALL-INNO-EDU-ENTERP Alliances for Education and Enterprises and Skill Innovation Alliance Project (ERASMUS KA2).

5. PROFILE, FUNCTIONING AND (EQA) ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY (COMPLIANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE ESG)

The relevant legislation provides for the main areas of CYQAA's responsibilities / activities, which are within the scope of the ESG. These are described in detail in Chapter 6 of the SAR:

1. Institutional evaluation – accreditation
2. Departmental Evaluation – accreditation
3. Program evaluation – accreditation
4. Joint program evaluation – accreditation
5. Evaluation – accreditation of cross border education, offered by local institutions in member states or in third party countries (including e-learning programs of study and franchise programs of study)

CYQAA conducts external quality assurance with professionalism, consistency, and transparency, ensuring the recognition and impact of its evaluations. The agency publishes the external evaluation procedure, standards, quality indicators, and relevant forms/templates on its website, ensuring that they are accessible and transparent. These forms include the template for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to apply for external evaluation, which includes a self-assessment template.

All activities listed above, are carried out within a specific set framework regulated by the national legislation and policy decisions of the CYQAA Council which are in full compliance with each standard of Part 3 of the ESG.

5.1 ESG STANDARD 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE.

Standard 3.1

Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

CYQAA undertakes external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis.

1. Institutional evaluation – accreditation
2. Departmental Evaluation – accreditation
3. Program evaluation – accreditation
4. Joint program evaluation – accreditation
5. Evaluation – accreditation of cross border education, offered by local institutions in member states or in third party countries (including e-learning programs of study and franchise programs of study)

The following Table 6 summarizes how many procedures per each EQA activity were implemented per year (for the last five years). The number of accreditations is outside brackets and number of rejections is in brackets. Table 7 provides details for (a) joint programs of study, (b) e-learning programs of study and (c) joint e-learning programs of study.

Table 6: EQA activities implemented for the last five years

TYPE OF EQA	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Programmatic – Short Cycle	38 + [1]	25 + [1]	33	41	30 + [1]
Programmatic – Bachelor*	20 + [6]	19 + [3]	35 + [1]	86 + [1]	45 + [1]
Programmatic – Master*	28 + [4]	31 + [5]	43 + [1]	94 + [1]	70 + [2]
Programmatic - Integrated Master	0	1	0	1	4
Programmatic - Doctorate	7	9	12	38	19
Programmatic – Medical	0	1	2	1	1
Departmental	1	1	19	44	24
Institutional	1 + [3]	2	4	1	6 + [1]
Institutional (cross-border QA)	-	-	-	-	1
Joint*	0	0	0	1	11
E-learning*	7 [3]	9 [5]	11[1]	26	17 [1]
Franchise (cross-border QA)	0	-	1	-	4

*The number includes joint and e-learning programs of study.

Table 7: EQA activities implemented for the last five years: for (a) joint programs of study, (b) e-learning programs of study and (c) joint e-learning programs of study.

		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Joint	Bachelor	-	-	-	-	-
	Master	-	-	-	1	11
	Doctorate	-	-	-	-	-
	TOTAL	-	-	-	1	11
E-Learning	Bachelor	2	1	1	3	-
	Master	6	7	11	23+[1]	17+[2]
	Doctorate					
	TOTAL	8	8	12	26+[1]	17+[2]
Joint + E-Learning	Bachelor					
	Master				1	5
	Doctorate					
	TOTAL	-	-	-	1	5

The CYQAA has clear and explicit goals and objectives which are provided by the legislation governing its establishment and operation. These are made publicly available on its website. On its website, CYQAA states its responsibilities that translate into the daily work of the Agency, evaluation, and accreditation: With the cooperation of HEIs, the Agency contributes towards the effort for the establishment of Cyprus as district center of quality higher education, in accordance to the standards and guidelines provided by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The mission statement included on CYQAA's website is the following: The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education is responsible to ensure the quality of Higher Education in Cyprus and to provide support, through the procedures provided by the relevant legislation, for the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programs of study.

The Agency's published "Quality Policy Statement,"⁹ states the following: The CYQAA formally affirms its commitment to quality, acknowledging that high professional standards and integrity in the Agency's work are indispensable, and that quality assurance in the performance of its activities is essential to the credibility of its actions and the trust of its stakeholders, namely higher education institutions, students, political authorities, and society at large.

The fundamental elements of CYQAA's quality policy are:

- A clear definition of its mission and objectives, which have been defined in the Law [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021] as follows:
 - the quality assurance and Quality Accreditation of teaching, research, education, and other services provided by institutions of higher education in the context of their mission;
 - the accreditation of private universities for their entry in the relevant Register of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and the granting of initial license to operate as well as the continuation of their license to operate as private universities, in accordance with the provisions of the Private Universities (Establishment, Operation and Control) Laws, 2005 to 2011;

⁹ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/dipae/dilosipolitikis-poiotitas>

- the Accreditation of private institutions of tertiary education for the purpose of their entry in the Relevant Register of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth;
 - the Quality assurance of cross-border education provided by local institutions, as well as of similar activities of local institutions in member states and third countries; and
 - the Quality assurance and Quality Accreditation of the education offered by other education centers, offering higher professional education.
- Compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG) and the relevant national legislation;
 - Quality management of the evaluation process of programs, departments, and institutions of higher education;
 - Transparency of all its activities;
 - Establishment of accountability mechanisms;
 - Adoption of a Code of Ethics by every member of the Agency's Board;
 - Development of a quality culture among its internal and external members and collaborators;
 - Establishment of monitoring and continuous improvement mechanisms of its activities;
 - The periodic external evaluation of the Agency;
 - CYQAA's collaboration with ENQA and EQAR. In order to adhere to its quality policy, CYQAA establishes the following internal quality assurance mechanisms:
 - Scheduling of activities (external evaluations) on a six-month basis, systematic progress monitoring, decision making for internal quality assurance via personnel and council meetings, and tasks and objectives achievement appraisal feedback;
 - Formal and informal hearings of higher education institutions and their representative bodies on the development of legislation, criteria, procedures, and instruments related to external evaluation and accreditation processes;
 - Implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) a total management tool used in the civil service in Cyprus and in Europe.
 - Adoption of the "Code of Contact and Ethics of Civil Servants" for the staff of the Agency. The document focuses on:

- Basic standards and rules governing the behavior of the officers when they come in direct, personal or telephone contact with the citizens, under the general obligations of decorum, professionalism, and honesty.
- Ethical standards governing the actions of officials with regards to the handling of citizens' affairs (respect for legality, obligation to impartiality, objective judgment, credibility, accountability and transparency, the duty of equal treatment of citizens and good administration);
- Monitoring, reviewing, and regularly updating the evaluation and accreditation mechanisms and procedures;
- Meetings of the Agency's Council on a monthly basis – The Council systematically examines comments, analyses, and suggestions, and when appropriate, integrates them in the decision making process;
- Collection and analysis of feedback from the Agency's stakeholders, such as higher education institutions, members of external evaluation committees, student associations, faculty associations, professional associations, and Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, regarding the Agency's organization, tools, performance, and evaluation and accreditation procedures.
- Guidance and briefing of the members of external evaluation committees and specialized training of the Agency's staff;
- Development and regular supplementation of an experts' registry, with experienced experts in all disciplines from all over Europe;
- Systematic study of ENQA publications and reports;
- Organization of seminars for institutions of higher education aiming at their updating and guidance on the Agency's policies and its external evaluation procedures;
- Development and systematic updating of the Agency's forms, questionnaires, documents, etc. targeting transparency and equal treatment of higher education institutions;
- Monitoring and assessment of the Agency's procedures and activities by the Council of the Agency and the competent assigned officer;
- Recording and presentation of the Agency's activities and distribution of day-to-day tasks to the members of the personnel via bottom-up procedures. The Council of CYQAA pledges to ensure the fulfilment of this quality policy and its periodic updating taking into account the development of higher education matters,

the Agency's needs and those of its environment. The present quality policy is communicated to all internal and external partners of the Agency and it is available on the Agency's Website.

Moreover, the CYQAA actively engages Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, various professional bodies, in its external QA procedures. The primary goal of this engagement is to safeguard stakeholder involvement in the QA activities processes followed by the Agency, promoting transparency and fostering mutual trust.

For the involvement of stakeholders in its work CYQAA facilitates and ensures effective two-way communication, via:

1. Providing up-to-date information on its website and various social media platforms.
2. Organizing seminars, webinars, and conferences to facilitate knowledge sharing.
3. Arranging scheduled meetings with key persons from HE and professional associations.
4. Conducting surveys to gather input and insights.
5. Conducting scheduled meetings with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.
6. Conducting scheduled meetings with other stakeholders such as students, academic personnel, and representatives of institutions and organizations.

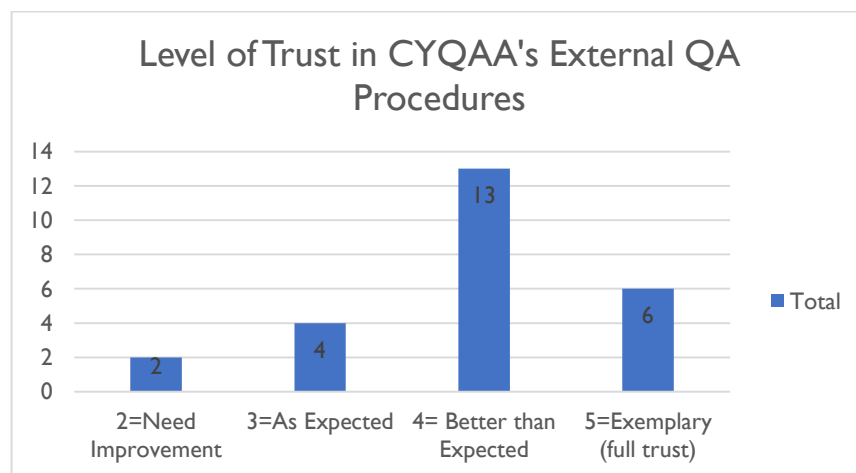
Stakeholder engagement in the governance and operations of the Agency is ensured by Article 28 of the Law [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021] which provides for the composition of the Agency's Council and the involvement of stakeholders in governance is protected by this provision. The Council of the Agency consists of eight members who hold the rank of Professor or Professor Emeritus and possess experience in university management and quality assurance in Higher Education. The Council composition includes the following:

- Five members who are Professors or Professors Emeriti from universities operating in the Republic. Among them, three members must come from the public universities of the Republic.

- Three members who are distinguished academics at the rank of Professor or Professor Emeritus, originating from at least two different countries, preferably member states.
- Two members representing professional organizations and bodies.
- One member who is an undergraduate student.

Survey conducted by CYQAA in October 2022, indicates that HEI's have a high level of trust in CYQAA's external quality assurance procedures in general. The majority of HEIs indicated that the procedures were better than expected and a significant number noted that they have full trust in CYQAA's procedures.

Figure 4: Level of trust in CYQAA's external QA procedures



Concerning the clarity of the goals and objectives of the quality assurance activities as described and published the vast majority of HEIs (23 out of 25) responded positively. As per the statement on their involvement in the scope of the Agency's work 16 out of 25 HEIs indicated that they are satisfied with their involvement. 4 HEIs indicated "Not Sure." The vast majority of the respondents 21 out of 25 indicated that they are satisfied with the level of involvement of international members in agency committees. 3 HEIs indicated "Not Sure."

Reflections:

The Agency performs its activities through transparent procedures, thus reinforcing the institutions' and the public's trust. In addition to the explicitly stated responsibilities and mission, the Agency has published its external evaluation process on its website. The process defines the nature of interaction between the Agency and relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially HEIs as well as the scope of the Agency's work. Stakeholder involvement is discussed in other sections this SAR, but it is worth mentioning here that in the survey recently conducted by CYQAA, the majority of respondents felt that their involvement in the implementation of CYQAA's mission and objectives occurs often.

5.2 ESG STANDARD 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

Standard 3.2

Official Status: Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognized as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

CYQAA was established on the basis of “The Quality Assurance and Accreditation in 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] and thus, it is formally recognized as the only national quality assurance agency, by the competent public authorities of the Republic of Cyprus.

It is, herewith, clarified that the so-called “Higher Education, Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council (YODAK) is an illegal body operating under the purported “Law” of the so called “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”) which, according to the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and international Law, is an illegal entity not recognized by the international community with the sole exception of Turkey. As such, neither YODAK nor the accreditations it provides may be accepted or recognized by internationally recognized educational organizations or by members of the international community in general. The unilateral declaration of independence of the so-called “TRNC” and the establishment of its “institutions” constitutes a violation of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and of international legality.

Survey conducted by CYQAA in October 2022¹⁰, indicates that HEI's confirm that CYQAA has organizational independence, demonstrated by official documentation (e.g. instruments of government, legislative acts or statutes of the organization) that stipulates the independence of the agency's work from third parties, such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholder organizations (19 out of 25) and that CYQAA has Operational independence in regard to the operation of the agency's procedures and methods as well as the nomination and appointment of external experts are undertake independently from third parties such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders (22 out of 25).

Reflections:

The legal status and recognition of CYQAA as the national quality assurance agency in the Republic of Cyprus is safeguarded by Law and thus it is the only competent authority in Cyprus formally recognized by government and stakeholders.

HEIs in Cyprus may choose an EQAR registered body for their external evaluation granted that the higher institution concerned has obtained the prior consent of the National Agency (CYQAA), that the role of agencies other than CYQAA shall be limited to Evaluation and not to Accreditation. The final decision is to be taken by CYQAA based on the outcomes of the external QA activity carried out by the EQAR-registered agency.

For purposes of securing the first of Institutional, Departmental or Programmatic Accreditation, it is necessary to submit a relevant application to the National Agency (CYQAA). This is necessary since a large number of European QA Agencies may conduct external evaluations internationally.

¹⁰ [ANNEX I - Higher Education Institutions' Feedback on the Implementation of Part 3 of the European Standards and Guidelines \(2015\) \(dipae.ac.cy\)](#)

5.3 ESG STANDARD 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

Standard 3.3

Independence: Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

CYQAA is an independent and autonomously acting agency. The Agency has full responsibility for its operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence. Its independence is evidenced by the following indicators:

1. Its decisions are not subjected to any approval by other bodies.
2. Its personnel exclusively works for running its operations.
3. It has its own offices.
4. It has separate budget for its operations.

CYQAA decides independently on the implementation of its operations, i.e., the evaluations, methods used, the members of the external evaluation committees, timetables, content of reports, and other decisions pertaining to evaluations. Other interested parties, such as HEIs, ministries or stakeholders have no influence on CYQAA's decisions or evaluation results. CYQAA is an independent agency operating with the financial support of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. CYQAA has a separate sub-item in the state budget, which can independently decide how to use.

The Organizational independence of CYQAA is further strengthened by Article 26 (9) of the legislation which states that:

The Agency shall be independent to the extent required to do its work autonomously and to exercise independently its functions so that its conclusions and recommendations contained in

the evaluation reports shall not be influenced by third parties concerned such as higher education institutions, ministries or others.

With regards to operational independence, it is noted that, the members of CYQAA's Council are not representatives of their employers (e.g. HEIs), but represent the whole of higher education in Cyprus as independent experts.

Additionally, according to Article 26 (10),

[...] no member of the External Evaluation Committee is permitted to have or had in the last three (3) years before being appointed, any academic, research, administrative, financial or personal cooperation relationship with an institution he/she is called upon to evaluate either at institutional level or at the level of a specific department or program of study and for this purpose he/she shall sign a solemn declaration.

With regards to the independence of formal outcomes, it is noted that the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the Agency. It is stated in the procedure for external evaluation, published on CYQAA's website, that the External Evaluation Committee is not expected to submit a suggestion for the approval or the rejection of the program of study under evaluation. This decision falls under the competencies of the Council of the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education.

In addition to the above CYQAA has prepared an amending Law exclusively on the recommendation for separation from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. The draft, which is at this time processed by the Legal Service of the Republic, provides for the Agency's independence in organizational terms, including the staff recruitment process and financial services. The draft of law includes, amongst others, provisions for the Agency's competency to,

- (i) perform any act entailed by the fulfillment of its purposes under this Law or undertaken or likely to be undertaken by or against legal persons governed by public Law;
- (ii) sue and be sued;
- (iii) accept, purchase, and possess movable or immovable property;

- (iv) acquire by lease, exchange, gift or in any other way immovable or movable property;
- (i) to sell, exchange, donate, lease, assign, mortgage or encumber his property or in any way dispose of any of his movable or immovable property, which upon its abolition becomes the property of the State; and
- (ii) to recruit scientific or other personnel as specified in Regulations.

Within the framework of the new Law, fees payable by HEIs for external evaluation will be deposited to the Agency's accounts and will be included in its budget as income.

Survey conducted by CYQAA in October 2022, indicates that HEI's confirm that CYQAA has organizational independence, demonstrated by official documentation (e.g. instruments of government, legislative acts or statutes of the organization) that stipulates the independence of the agency's work from third parties, such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholder organizations (19 out of 25) and that CYQAA has Operational independence in regard to the operation of the agency's procedures and methods as well as the nomination and appointment of external experts are undertake independently from third parties such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders (22 out of 25).

Reflections:

Several key indicators demonstrate the Agency's autonomy and independent functioning. These indicators include the absence of approval from external bodies for decision-making, the dedicated personnel solely focused on agency operations, the presence of separate offices, and an independent budget allocated for its activities.

The agency exercises independent decision-making authority in implementing its operations, including evaluations, selection of evaluation committee members, setting timetables, determining report content, and making other evaluation-related decisions. The influence of external parties such as higher education institutions, ministries, or stakeholders on CYQAA's decisions or evaluation results is explicitly stated to be non-existent. This underscores the agency's independence and its role as an impartial evaluator.

5.4 ESG STANDARD 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard 3.4

Thematic Analysis: Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

The Agency has established a process for analyzing the External Committees' Evaluation Reports, reflecting on them, and publishing the main trends and quality indicators of HE in Cyprus. One member of staff has been entrusted with the collection and initial analysis of the experts' findings and recommendations. A second staff member is always responsible for inter-rate agreement. A report of the initial findings is presented at the end of each academic semester/year to the Council for Reflections, further elaboration on the programs' and institutions' compliance with ESG, their differentiation in quality, and the achievement of the expected progress and compliance with the ESG.

The thematic analysis reports are published on the Agency's website for institutions' and other stakeholders' Reflections on difficulties and on positive trends.

Since 2019, six (6) thematic analysis reports have been published by the agency.

Table 8: Thematic analysis reports published by the agency

	Title	Period	Number of programs	Publication Date
01-0006	Student Assessment: Trends and Dominant Issues	September 2018 - September 2021	60	06-07-2022

01-0005	PhD Program's Evaluation	September 2015 - September 2020	31	18-02-2021
01-0004	E-learning Masters' programs' evaluation: Trends and Dominant Issues	February 2019 - February 2020	32	01-06-2020
01-0003	Master E-learning programs' evaluation: Trends and Dominant Issues	January 2016 - January 2019	26	03-06-2019
01-0002	Master programs' Evaluation: Trends and Dominant Issues	September 2017 - September 2018	41	02-04-2019
01-0001	Colleges' Short Cycle Programs' Evaluation: Trends and Dominant Issues	September 2017 - September 2018	42	01-04-2019

Thematic analyses indicate that, since the establishment of the Agency in 2015, significant improvements have been recorded in all quality indicators related to higher education. Experts' comments and suggestions coded in the Thematic analyses are mainstreamed and communicated to the institutions. Communication is augmented via regular announcements and circulars.

As a result of the thematic analysis, CYQAA identifies any specific areas of concern and accordingly organizes trainings for HEIs. Some recent examples are:

- The two-day hybrid Seminar on "Student-centered Learning, Teaching, and Assessment."

The keynote speakers and coordinators of the workshops were Sabine Hoidn (University of St. Gallen and University of Zurich) and Manja Klemenčič (Harvard University), experts in student-centered teaching and learning. Other experts from Europe and the US delivered their presentations online (September 2022)

- One-day Seminar on Academic Integrity

The keynote speaker and workshop coordinator will be Dr. Helen Gniel Director - Higher Education Integrity Unit at Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency – Melbourne (scheduled for October 2023)

- Seminar on student assessment (Scheduled for November 2023)

As a result of this process, thematic analyses indicate that institutions were adaptable to the proposed new conditions and were able to transform and adjust their practices.

Nevertheless, many more steps are needed to optimize quality in Higher Education. Challenges and key areas of improvement identified in the thematic analyses are coded, prioritized, and transformed into specific guidelines for External Evaluation Committees. To this end, CYQAA officers provide to EEC members, during their briefings, clear guidelines about observing and commenting, among others, on those specific areas of priority.

Survey conducted by CYQAA in October 2022, indicates that findings of the Agency published in the Thematic Analyses have contributed to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in our institution (23 out of 25. 2 respondents stated “Not Sure.”

Reflections:

The Agency’s alignment with standard 3.4 of the ESG is indicated by the Agency's commitment to an iterative and participatory evaluation process. By systematically analyzing and reflecting on the Evaluation Reports, the Agency facilitates continuous improvement, informs decision-making, and encourages stakeholders' active involvement in shaping the future of HE in Cyprus.

5.5 ESG STANDARD 3.5 RESOURCES

Standard 3.5

Resources: Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

CYQAA receives its financial resources from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. There are provisions in the legislation with regards to the delivery, on behalf of the Ministry of the “appropriate resources, both human and financial.” Specifically, according to Article 33, “The Secretary-General of the Ministry shall, with the approval of the Minister, undertake the task of finding suitable offices for the Agency, its staffing with suitable human resources from the public and educational service, its technical support and coverage of its administrative operating costs.”

The following table provides information on total budget, the agency’s expenditure, and the overall change in the budget size in the last five years:

Table 9: Main items of expenditure

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	€	€	€	€	€
Total budget	1.355.271	2.311.996	2.189.173	2.004.431	2.012.765
Total spending	695.539	820.449	830.992	894.156	609.012
Income from external evaluation fees [not	775.400	3.055.000	758.555	660.345	750.290

included in the total budget]					
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The financial independence of the Agency is safeguarded by the legislation, since according to Article 27 (2), “The Council shall have full authority to manage the budget of the Agency and administer and manage its property under the provisions of this Law and the Regulations made thereunder.” Additionally, CYQAA is authorized, by legislation, to propose the implementation of legislative and other measures necessary to achieve the mission, objectives, operation and collection of the necessary revenue for the Agency.

Currently, on the basis of its above-mentioned endorsement, a bill is processed by the Legal Service of the Republic that provides for the Agency’s complete financial independence, especially with regards to its budget and finances. The bill includes, amongst others, provisions for the Agency’s competency to:

- perform any act entailed by the fulfillment of its purposes under this Law or undertaken or likely to be undertaken by or against legal persons governed by public Law;
- sue and be sued;
- accept, purchase, and possess movable or immovable property;
- acquire by lease, exchange, gift or in any other way immovable or movable property;
- to sell, exchange, donate, lease, assign, mortgage or encumber his property or in any way dispose of any of his movable or immovable property, which upon its abolition becomes the property of the State; and to recruit scientific or other personnel as specified in Regulations.

The new Law also provides that fees payable by HEIs for external evaluation will be deposited to the Agency’s accounts and will be included in its budget as income.

CYQAA’s personnel consists of one (1) Administrative Officer, nine (9) Education Officers and two (2) Administrative Assistants. More than half of the members of the staff have previous experience in the Education Management sector, whereas all the members of staff have gathered substantial experience from their involvement in hundreds of external evaluations that took place over the last 5 years.

Staff have participated in conferences and seminars organized primarily by European quality assurance bodies and CYQAA itself. The staff also receives training from the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration for the effective and efficient carrying out of their daily tasks. Staff also attends training seminars at the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute.¹¹

In September 2022, all staff participated in a two-day seminar on Student Centered Learning, Teaching, and Assessment organized by the CYQAA, the University of St. Gallen, and Harvard.

One member of staff has recently attended the ENQA's 14th Training of Agency Reviewers 9-10 May 2022 and has been officially included in the ENQA pool of experts. Additionally, another member of staff is currently engaged in the ENQA Leadership Development Programme 2023. He successfully attended the first out of the three workshops in the program, hosted by A3ES in Lisbon from 24th to 26th May 2023

Systematic training of the staff in evaluation methods and quality management processes to strengthen the skills and expertise of the Agency as a whole is included in the Agency's strategic plan.

The current number of personnel, is still a challenge for the Agency, taking into consideration the number of HEIs in Cyprus and the total number of programs of study that have to be externally evaluated by 2022. The recent Covid-19 pandemic situation and the shift to remote evaluations has helped considerably in the effective use of technology and the increase in productivity via remote work.

Survey conducted by CYQAA in October 2022¹², shows that the vast majority of HEI's noted that CYQAA resources enable the Agency to organize and run its external quality assurance activities in an effective and efficient manner (18 out of 25. 7 HEIs indicated "Not Sure") and that these resources enable the Agency to improve, to reflect on their practice and to inform the public about their activities (19 out of 25. 6 HEIs indicated "Not Sure").

¹¹ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/cyqaa-en/the-personnel-en>

¹² ANNEX I

Reflections:

As an organization that serves public interest, considering the significant influence of HE, CYQAA is safeguarded by Law to receive sufficient and suitable funding. The allocated resources to CYQAA enable the Agency to effectively and efficiently organize and carry out its external quality assurance initiatives. Additionally, these resources enable CYQAA to enhance its operations, engage in self-Reflections, and communicate its activities to the public.

5.6 ESG STANDARD 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard 3.6

Internal quality assurance and professional conduct: Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

CYQAA has established processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring, and enhancing the quality and integrity of its activities. CYQAA's coordinator is responsible for internal quality assurance and development of relevant activities and policies, which are processed and approved by the Council.

CYQAA applies an internal quality assurance policy, which is available on its website as its "Quality Policy Statement."¹³ This policy ensures that,

- all persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically;
- includes internal and external feedback mechanisms that lead to a continuous improvement within the agency; guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination;
- outlines the appropriate communication with the relevant authorities of those jurisdictions where they operate;
- ensures that any activities carried out and material produced by subcontractors are in line with the ESG, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance activities are subcontracted to other parties;
- allows the agency to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality assurance.

In addition to its "Quality Policy Statement" CYQAA applies the following:

¹³ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/cyqaa-en/quality-policy-statement-en>

- 1) Code of contact and Ethics for the members of the staff
- 2) Code of Deontology and absence of Conflict of Interest for the Members of the Board
- 3) CYQAA Privacy Policy
- 4) Appeals Procedure
- 5) Complaints' Policy
- 6) Environmental Policy/Mission Statement
- 7) Gender Equality Policy
- 8) Cross-border Quality Assurance - Policy and Guidelines
- 9) Questionnaires for the Members of the External Evaluation Committees
- 10) Questionnaires for HEIs

Each staff member is responsible for the quality of his or her own work in accordance with the common procedures in place. As for the new staff, a mentoring procedure is in place in regard to external evaluations and day-to-day activities.

The Agency promotes professional development opportunities to (a) members of external evaluation committees (academics, students, members of professional bodies), (b) administrative and academic members of HEIs, and (c) members of the Agency's personnel. Professional development topics vary from technical ones (correctly completing various paperwork) to more substantive ones (shared knowledge and understanding of the criteria for external evaluation, the evaluator's role, issues that may arise during the external evaluation, and what constitutes quality upgrading of the higher education programs of study).

The officers of the Agency attended seminars/conferences, both in person and online, on quality assurance and certification, but also in the areas of their individual scientific expertise. The following indicative list presents the seminars attended by officers of the Agency in the field of quality assurance in higher education:

- ENQA webinar - Micro-credentials and the role of external quality assurance (February 2021)
- ENQA and QAA webinar - Protecting and promoting academic integrity: How quality assurance agencies can take action (March 2021)
- Covid-19 and internal quality assurance webinar hosted by the European University Association (May 2021)

- Webinar "Reflecting on the future of European Quality Assurance" organized jointly by AQU Catalunya, A3ES, NOKUT and QQI (May 2021)
- EDEN NAP webinar Asynchronous approaches to teaching and learning (October 2021)
- ENQA online General Assembly Seminar: Trends and innovations: what's new in the ENQA family? (October 2021)
- CARDET "Cyprus Education Summit: Digital Transformation and Digital Skills." (December 2021)
- ENQA's 14th Training of Agency Reviewers (9 - 10 May 2022)
- ENQA/CHAIN5 webinar: External QA at level 5 - Time for a common approach? (6 April 2023 10:00-11:30)

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), within its mission for the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programs of study, has successfully organized a two-day hybrid Seminar on "Student-centered Learning, Teaching, and Assessment." The keynote speakers and coordinators of the workshops were Sabine Hoidn (University of St. Gallen and University of Zurich) and Manja Klemenčič (Harvard University), experts in student-centered teaching and learning. Other experts from Europe and the US delivered their presentations online.

The Minister of Education, Sport and Youth as well as the President of the Council of CYQAA addressed the seminar. The Minister emphasized that the issue of ensuring the quality of higher education is considered as one of the priorities of the Ministry and congratulated the President, the Vice President, and the Council Members of CYQAA for taking the initiative in organizing the seminar. The President of the Council referred to the great importance that should be given to student-centered teaching and learning, highlighting the basic measures that should be implemented by the coordinators for its achievement.

More than one hundred representatives from all HEIs in Cyprus attended the seminar, who familiarized themselves with good practices and with tools and procedures, aiming at cultivating skills for enhancing the role of the student in the learning process.

There was a positive feedback from the participants regarding the organization of the seminar as well as the value of the seminar and the presenters.

Being at the forefront of developments in Higher Education CYQAA is organizing a one-day Seminar on Academic Integrity (scheduled for October 2023). The keynote speaker and workshop coordinator will be Dr. Helen Gniel Director - Higher Education Integrity Unit at Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency – Melbourne. Additionally a seminar on student assessment – Mapping and Rubrics is scheduled for November 2023.

Survey conducted by CYQAA in October 2022¹⁴, shows that the vast majority of HEIs noted that the Agency, ensures that all persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically (22 out of

25). Respondents also noted that the Agency, includes internal and external feedback mechanisms that lead to a continuous improvement within the agency (17 out of 25, 8 stated “Not Sure”), the Agency, guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination (20 out of 25,4 stated “Not Sure”).

As per the statement if the Agency establishes the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality assurance (20 out of 25,4 stated “Not Sure”)

Reflections:

Taking into consideration various indicative factors such as,

- adherence to established procedures
- continuous improvement,
- compliance with the ESG,

¹⁴ [ANNEX I - Higher Education Institutions' Feedback on the Implementation of Part 3 of the European Standards and Guidelines \(2015\) \(dipae.ac.cy\)](#)

- training and professional development,
- transparency and communication,
- periodic monitoring and evaluation through external review procedures,

CYQAA safeguards that its internal quality assurance practices are robust, effective, and aligned with the goals of continuous improvement and enhancement of higher education quality.

5.7 ESG STANDARD 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard 3.7

Cyclical external review of agencies: Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Since its establishment in November 2015, CYQAA was reviewed by ENQA for the first time in 2018 and achieved Full ENQA Membership (21 February 2019).

In 2019 CYQAA applied for Recognition by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME). After a rigorous external evaluation procedure, CYQAA was awarded Recognition Status by WFME for 10 years, until 28 February 2030.

The current ENQA external review is its second external evaluation. Quality Assurance of the Agency is amongst the Council's priorities so it plans to undergo external reviews by ENQA and other European and International quality assurance bodies, periodically as required.

Reflections:

CYQAA's self-evaluations and external audits to verify the strength, effectiveness, and alignment of its internal quality assurance procedures with the objectives of constant improvement, are provided for in the Law. The Agency's periodic external reviews serve as per the Agency's accountability to society and constitute a proactive approach which brings about advantages, as it ensures that its internal quality assurance practices remain resilient and efficient, while maintaining focus on its mission of continuously advancing the quality of higher education.

6. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENCY'S EQA ACTIVITIES (COMPLIANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE ESG)

6.1 ESG STANDARD 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard 2.1

Consideration of internal quality assurance: External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance described in Part 1 of the ESG.

As mentioned previously, CYQAA's primary objective is to act in order to create a quality driven culture. Therefore, external evaluation procedures undertaken by the Agency also focus on the quality system that HEIs develop. Amongst others, EECs examine HEIs established procedures for the safeguarding and further development of their activities.

According to the Law [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021] (Article 12), HEIs shall aim to continuously improve the quality of their teaching and research work and of their internal quality assurance. HEIs are legally obliged to apply the following standards:

- Commitment to cultivate attitudes and behaviors that recognize the importance of quality assurance in the performance of their work
- Implementation of a policy and associated procedures for quality assurance and standards in relation to the programs of study offered and the higher education qualifications awarded
- Operation of formal mechanisms for the approval, monitoring, and periodic review, and where necessary revision of the programs of study offered and the higher education qualifications awarded
- Taking care for the evaluation of students on the basis of published criteria, regulations, and procedures applied consistently
- Possession of the necessary qualifications and skills required by the teaching staff in relation to the teaching work they are called upon to perform, and the data documenting the degree of competency of their teaching staff

- Adequacy and suitability of learning resources for each program of study offered for purposes of supporting the student's learning process
- Collection, analysis, and use of all data related to the effectiveness and efficiency in the management of the programs of study offered and other educational activities
- Disclosure, in printed and electronic form, at regular intervals, of an updated, impartial and objective report regarding the programs of study offered and the other educational activities, as well as the qualifications they confer.

The implementation of each standard of Part 1 of the ESG by CYQAA for all external evaluation activities is presented in the sections that follow. The table below summarizes how each EQA activity meets the standards of Part 1 of the ESG at CYQAA:

Table 10: EQA activities and the ESG -Mapping

ESG	CYQAA quality indicators/criteria for Institutional Evaluation (document num. 300.2.1)	CYQAA quality indicators/criteria for Departmental Evaluation (document num. 300.3.1)	CYQAA quality indicators/criteria for Programme Evaluation-conventional-face-to-face programme of study (document num. 300.1.1)	CYQAA quality indicators/criteria for Joint-Conventional-face-to-face programme of study (document num. 300.1.1/3)
1.1 Policy for quality assurance	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1	1.1
	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2	1.2
	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.6)	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.4)	1.3	1.3
	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.8)	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.6)	1.4	1.4
	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.10)	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.20)	6.1	6.1
	3(3.1-3.8)	3(3.1-3.11)	6.2	6.2
	6(6.1-6.11)	6(6.1-6.9)	6.3	6.3

				7.1
				7.2
				7.3
1.2 Design and approval of programmes	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)		1.1
	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.1	1.2
	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.6)	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.4)	1.2	1.3
	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.8)	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.6)	1.3	1.4
	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.10)	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.20)	1.4	6.1
	4.1(4.1.1-4.1.5)	4.1(4.1.1-4.1.5)	6.1	6.2
	4.2(4.2.1-4.2.5)	4.2(4.2.1-4.2.8)	6.2	6.3
			6.3	7.1
				7.2
				7.3
1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment		2.1(2.1.1-2.1.6)		2.1
	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.8)	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.20)	2.1	2.2
	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.10)	3(3.1-3.11)	2.2	2.3
	4.1(4.1.1-4.1.5)	4.1(4.1.1-4.1.5)	2.3	6.1
	4.2(4.2.1-4.2.5)	4.2(4.2.1-4.2.8)	6.1	6.2
		6(6.1-6.9)	6.2	6.3
			6.3	7.1
				7.2

				7.3
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)		4.1
	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	4.1	4.2
	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.6)	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.4)	4.2	4.3
	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.8)	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.6)	4.3	4.4
	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.10)	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.20)	4.4	6.1
	4.1(4.1.1-4.1.5)	4.1(4.1.1-4.1.5)	6.1	6.2
	4.2(4.2.1-4.2.5)	4.2(4.2.1-4.2.8)	6.2	6.3
			6.3	7.1
				7.2
				7.3
1.5 Teaching staff	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	3.1	3.1
	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	3.2	3.2
	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.6)	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.4)	3.3	3.3
	5(5.1-5.9)	5(5.1-5.8)	6.1	6.1
	6(6.1-6.11)	6(6.1-6.9)	6.2	6.2
			6.3	6.3
				7.1
				7.2
				7.3

1.6 Learning resources and student support				5.1
				5.2
	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)		
	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	5.1	5.3
	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.6)	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.4)	5.2	5.4
	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.8)	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.6)	5.3	6.1
	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.10)	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.20)	5.4	6.2
	6(6.1-6.11)	3(3.1-3.11)	6.1	6.3
	7(7.1-7.7)	6(6.1-6.9)	6.2	7.1
		7(7.1-7.7)	6.3	7.2
1.7 Information management				7.3
				1.1
				1.2
	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1	1.3
	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2	1.4
	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.6)	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.4)	1.3	6.1
	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.8)	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.6)	1.4	6.2
	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.10)	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.20)	6.1	6.3
			6.2	7.1
			6.3	7.2
				7.3

1.8 Public information				1.1
				1.2
	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1	1.3
	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2	1.4
	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.6)	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.4)	1.3	6.1
	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.8)	2.1(2.1.1-2.1.6)	1.4	6.2
	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.10)	2.2(2.2.1-2.2.20)	6.1	6.3
			6.2	7.1
			6.3	7.2
				7.3
1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes				1.1
			1.1	1.2
	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.1(1.1.1-1.1.7)	1.2	1.3
	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.2(1.2.1-1.2.4)	1.3	1.4
	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.6)	1.3(1.3.1-1.3.4)	1.4	6.1
	4.1(4.1.1-4.1.5)	4.1(4.1.1-4.1.5)	6.1	6.2
	4.2(4.2.1-4.2.5)	4.2(4.2.1-4.2.8)	6.2	6.3
			6.3	7.1
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	Pursuant to the CYQAA Laws, evaluations / accreditation reviews are conducted five years.			7.2
				7.3

*For the evaluation of cross border education, offered by local institutions in member states or in third party countries, the same criteria apply as for program evaluation. Additional quality indicators/criteria for distance learning, doctoral and joint programs are included in the program evaluation.

External Quality Assurance conducted by CYQAA recognizes and supports institutional responsibility for QA. Since the establishment of the Agency, each HEI in Cyprus has established an Internal Quality Committee with the following composition (Article 13):

- (a) The vice-rector, responsible for academic affairs, and if there is no vice-rector, the head of academic subjects, who shall preside,
- (b) one (1) member of the academic staff of each faculty of the public or private university, as the case may be, or three (3) members of the teaching staff in the case of a tertiary education institution, having significant scientific work and extensive academic experience covering preferably and, where possible, expertise in quality assurance procedures,
- (c) up to two (2) members specializing in issues of quality assurance,
- (d) one (1) student representative who is nominated by the competent body representing the students:

Provided that, for an institution with graduate students, the representatives shall be two (2), out of whom, the one is an undergraduate and the other a graduate student,
- (e) one (1) representative from the administrative staff of the institution.

Internal Evaluation, which is conducted by the institution itself, and includes everything needed for the systematic collection of administrative data, the completion of questionnaires by students and graduates and the conducting of interviews with teaching staff and students for the purpose of preparing an Internal Evaluation Report, that will collectively and objectively reflect the image of the institution with the sole motive and aim to improve the quality of education offered by it:

14.-(1) The Internal Quality Committee of an institution shall be responsible for the implementation of the standards provided for in section 12 for internal quality assurance purposes.

(2) The Internal Quality Committee shall co-ordinate the preparation of the special self-evaluation reports in relation to the External Evaluations regarding the institution, in accordance with the standards applicable to these reports, which are prescribed and issued by the Agency based on the criteria and quality indicators provided for in the provisions of section 6 and in accordance with the provisions of this Law concerning external evaluations.

(3) The Internal Quality Committee shall be responsible for drawing up the institution's general evaluation reports for 25 submission to the Agency, which shall concern the institution in its entirety and include particulars on a number of core quality indicators issued by the Agency.

(4) The general Internal Evaluation reports should make reference to the internal quality management mechanisms adopted by the institution and any improvements in those mechanisms that may have been introduced in the period following the submission of the previous General Internal Evaluation Report.

Reflections:

During the previous ENQA review CYQAA was recommended to 'gradually shift the focus in its processes after the first accreditation cycle from controlling institutions to supporting them in carrying their responsibility for quality and in quality improvement, with due consideration to be given to the effectiveness of internal quality assurance.' CYQAA's processes for external quality assurance remain fully aligned with the ESG and shifting focus to supporting HEIs is demonstrated by the Agency's HEIs' involvement in its work and HEIs' training as elaborated upon in the previous chapters. At the same time we observe that HEIs take action over and above their obligations as provided by the relevant legislation by establishing strategic plans for quality assurance, offices and units within the institutions that are solely responsible for internal quality assurance and for the implementation of quality assurance systems.

6.2 ESG STANDARD 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard 2.2

Designing methodologies fit for purpose: External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

According to the Law [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021] “quality assurance” is the systematic confirmation of the continuous assurance and improvement of the quality level of an educational institution on the basis of the criteria set by CYQAA. In fact, external quality assurance signifies the effort for the continuous enhancement of the work of HEIs toward this direction. It requires the implementation of a uniform system (including annual reports and an Internal Evaluation Report), which will allow institutions of higher education to continuously assess and improve their performance.

CYQAA’s external evaluation procedures are based on respecting the academic autonomy of HEIs and trust in their intentions regarding their statutory responsibility for the quality of their operations. HEIs develop their own quality systems within the framework of the Law and strategies aiming at the improvement of their activities.

As a central part of this system, external evaluation is viewed as a regular, objective, and independent assessment carried out periodically by experienced external evaluators. The purpose of this external assessment is to define whether the various actions of HEIs and the ensuing results are consistent with their predefined plan; whether this plan is appropriate for the accomplishment of the institution’s objectives; and whether the plan is effectively implemented, thus ensuring the accomplishment of the institution’s goals and the improvement of its quality. The goal is to act as an enhancer for HEIs, to acknowledge the strengths, good practices, and areas of further development. Thus, HEIs are supported to reach their strategic objectives and

plan future development activities, in order to create a framework and culture for their continuous development.

The Agency, in accordance with the provisions of the relevant Law [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021] and the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG) for quality assurance, has set criteria for quality assurance that are published in the Agency's website. These criteria correspond to both quantitative and qualitative indicators regarding the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning, of research and development, and of the resources offered by HEIs to their students and staff. The criteria are periodically reviewed and upgraded.

External evaluations conducted are systematic, independent, and impartial, and are performed by external evaluation committees (EECs) consisting of expert academics in their respective fields. Based on the Agency's transparency principle, all EEC reports and other evaluation documents are available on the Agency's website.

The framework shaping the development of methodology in QA consists of three pillars: CYQAA legislation the ESG and feedback from stakeholders.

Relevant stakeholders are involved in the methodologies' design and continuous improvement.

The Agency's local stakeholders are:

- HEIs
- The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth
- Department of Higher Education
- The Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber
- Professional Associations and Boards of professions regulated by Law
- Registered associations of private schools
- The Ministries of the Republic of Cyprus
- The House of Representatives

- The Pancyprian Association of Students' Union (POFEN)
- The Youth Board of Cyprus, etc.

The Agency's overseas stakeholders are:

- ENQA
- EQAR
- WFME
- Quality assurance agencies in Europe and other countries
- International Experts – Members of CYQAA's EECs
- International experts – Invited by CYQAA to deliver workshops and seminars, etc.

Continuous and systematic dialogue is in place with the relevant stakeholders for matters of improving methodologies and processes.

Based on feedback from international experts CYQAA implements fit-for-purpose criteria and approaches for all its external evaluation procedures. Most recently, within this framework, CYQAA has redesigned its approach for the external evaluation of distance learning programs, PhD programs, joint programs, and programs in medical education.

In an attempt to identify emerging patterns regarding findings in external evaluations, the Agency studies and analyses external evaluation reports of programs of study and prepares thematic analyses reports, which are made available both to the public and to the HEIs, for productive discussion and upgrading of the HEIs' programs of study.

Reflections:

Stakeholder feedback, and data analysis are incorporated into CYQAA's fit-for-purpose methodology as they provide valuable insights into the quality and effectiveness of higher education at an international level. Fit-for-purpose approaches require continuous improvement by identifying areas of strength and areas in need of enhancement, as society, technology and science progress.

6.3 ESG STANDARD 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard 2.3

Implementing processes: External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;
- a consistent follow-up.

External quality assurance is carried out by the CYQAA in a professional, consistent, and transparent manner, thus ensuring its recognition and impact. The external evaluation procedure, the standards and quality indicators, as well as the relevant forms / templates are published on the Agency's website, safeguarding that they are known and transparent. The abovementioned forms include the template for the HEI application for external evaluation, which contains the template for self-assessment.

The following steps are followed for all types of HEI external evaluation:

STEP 1: Application on behalf of the HEI including a self-assessment

The application for external evaluation along with the self-assessment and other required supporting documents are submitted to the Agency's secretariat within the timeframe set and announced by the Agency's Council.

STEP 2: Appointment of the EEC (panel of experts)

The EEC for a given program of study/university department/institution under evaluation is appointed by the Agency. The EEC studies the HEI's application for external evaluation along with the self-assessment and may require additional materials.

STEP 3: External Evaluation Including a Site Visit

The site visit is an integral part of the external evaluation process. It is organized by CYQAA in close collaboration with the EEC members and the given program's coordinator and the quality assurance officer of the HEI. The duration of the visit depends on the size of the institution, in the case of institutional evaluation; the size of the department, in the case of departmental evaluation; the number of programs under evaluation, in the case of program evaluation (conventional, joint or cross-border), as well as the significance of issues that must be looked into. The purpose of the visit is to assess the accuracy of information and findings included in the application submitted by the HEI, which includes the self-assessment report. Additionally the site visit aims, to explore issues which were identified by the members of the EEC in the content of the application and/or during the visit as needing further clarification and/or additional information.

STEP 4: Writing of the External Evaluation Report

After the site visit, the EEC composes the draft External Evaluation Report on the basis of the HEI's application and self-assessment and findings during the site visit. The draft is approved and signed by all EEC members, and submitted to CYQAA.

STEP 5: Scrutiny of the External Evaluation Report on behalf of the HEI

The External Evaluation Report is forwarded by CYQAA to the institution, for eventual comments on possible factual errors or misconceptions. The institution examines any recommendations for action or if subsequent preparation of an action plan is required. In cases where there are major curricular changes or deficiencies flagged by the EEC the Chair of the Council is authorized the response of the HEI is sent back to the EEC for feedback to the Agency.

STEP 6: Examination of the External Evaluation Report and the HEI's Response by the Council

The CYQAA Council examines the External Evaluation Report and the HEI's Response in order to make a final decision for the accreditation or rejection of a given program of study/university department/institution. The final decision is recorded in the Agency's Final Report, which may contain recommendations for further action.

STEP 7: Follow-up

There is a follow-up procedure in place for monitoring the implementation of recommendations, on behalf of the institution, made in the Final Report by the CYQAA Council. Follow-up procedure timelines are stated in the Final Report indicating the deadline by which the HEI has to complete all actions toward the fulfillment of all recommendations. This time period may range from 1 to 12 months depending on the gravity of the recommendations.

An additional follow-up procedure is provided for, by the legislation, which sanctions the Agency to conduct audits in order to ascertain that the criteria upon which accreditation was granted are still fulfilled.

This additional follow-up/audit may be scheduled or take place impromptu. It may occur after a complaint is officially submitted to CYQAA.

Reflections:

CYQAA conducts external quality assurance in a professional, consistent, and transparent manner, ensuring its recognition and influence. Procedures as provided by the Law [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021] and published on the Agency's website¹⁵, are compliant with the ESG and embraced by HEIs and other stakeholders and within this framework they constitute a robust process for quality assurance in Cyprus and beyond.

¹⁵ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/evaluation-en/institution-department-programme-en>

6.4 ESG STANDARD 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard 2.4

Peer-review experts: External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

External quality assurance is carried out by groups of external experts (External Evaluation Committees – EECs). The procedure for selecting experts for external evaluations in HE is done in accordance with the ESGs.

6.4.1 External Evaluation Committees (EECs)

Experts are selected on the basis of their academic qualifications, rank, experience, research output and their ability to meet the specific requirements of the evaluation process, ensuring adherence the ESG. The relevant procedure is published on CYQAA's website.¹⁶

EECs for Institutional, Departmental and Program evaluation may be composed of:

- International academic experts
- National academic experts
- Students
- Representatives of recognized professional bodies
- Rectors and deans of academic institutions (professors or emeritus)
- Directors/managers of services of local or international universities

For each activity the typical number of experts is:

- 6 experts for Institutional evaluation – accreditation

¹⁶ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/experts-en>

- 4 experts for Departmental Evaluation – accreditation (+ one representative from a professional body if required)
- 4 experts - Program evaluation – accreditation (+ one representative from a professional body if required)
- 4 experts - Joint program evaluation – accreditation (+ one representative from a professional body if required)
- 4 experts - Evaluation – accreditation of cross border education, offered by local institutions in member states or in third party countries (including e-learning programs of study and franchise programs of study) (+ one representative from a professional body if required)

In all cases the panels may include an additional member for Distance learning.

EEC members can be either selected from the pool of experts maintained by CYQAA or they can apply to be included in the pool of experts via an online form which can be accessed on the Agency's website.¹⁷ The agency selects EEC members from its pool of experts which is constantly revised and updated. The agency trains experts after their appointment to a specific EEC.

In regard to programmatic and departmental evaluations there are three categories of experts: academic experts, experts from professional bodies, and student experts. As for institutional evaluation, four categories of experts are used: academic experts, student affairs experts, building and technological infrastructure experts, and student experts.

Academic Experts:

The Agency, even though it is not legally obliged to, selects academics at the rank of the Professor or the Associate Professor, only. For the programs of study that are offered via distance learning, even though there is no legal obligation, the Agency includes in the EEC an additional expert on distance learning. Prior to the

¹⁷ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/experts-en>

site-visit, CYQAA informs the members of the EEC about the national educational system and the evaluation procedures.

For institutional and departmental evaluations, the Agency selects academic experts holding the rank of Professor or who are Professors Emeriti.

The criteria for selecting an expert academic are the following:

- Strong background and expertise in the relevant field of higher education.
- Their employment at highly ranked universities (quality of teaching and learning, research, quality of student experience/life)
- Substantial experience in higher education, preferably with a track record of teaching, research, and/or administrative roles. Previous involvement in quality assurance processes or evaluations is highly valued.
- Familiarity with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG).
- Objectivity and Impartiality and no conflict of interest that could compromise the integrity of the assessment.
- Adherence to professional standards and demonstration of ethical conduct –maintaining confidentiality, respect diversity, and uphold the principles of integrity and fairness.

These criteria help ensure that expert academics selected for external quality assurance possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and attributes to contribute effectively to the evaluation process and uphold the standards of higher education quality.

Student Experts:

Public universities in Cyprus provide the Agency with a list of excellent students from various disciplines as potential members of the EECs. Interested students may also apply via the online form on the Agency's website. Student members, actively contributing as an integral members of EECs, are selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Is a university student
- High academic performance
- Experience in external evaluations and/or social activities/volunteering
- Participation in trainings on evaluation.
- Familiarity with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG)
- Objectivity and Impartiality and no conflict of interest that could compromise the integrity of the assessment.
- Adherence to professional standards and demonstration of ethical conduct –maintaining confidentiality, respect diversity, and uphold the principles of integrity and fairness.

Experts from Professional Bodies:

Every year, professional associations of regulated professions provide the Agency with a list of their members who are able to participate in the EECs. Members of the EECs from professional bodies are selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Knowledge of the law governing the registration of professionals in their respective fields
- Experience in professional review processes
- Participation in trainings
- Familiarity with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG)
- Objectivity and Impartiality and no conflict of interest that could compromise the integrity of the assessment.
- Adherence to professional standards and demonstration of ethical conduct –maintaining confidentiality, respect diversity, and uphold the principles of integrity and fairness.

Reflections:

As is deducted from the above, the foundation of external quality assurance and ultimately cultivating a quality culture in HE, for CYQAA, relies on the extensive range of knowledge and expertise brought by international peer experts. These experts contribute to the agency's work by providing insights from various perspectives, including those of their home institutions, research centers and professional. To maintain the integrity and consistency of the experts' contributions, a careful selection process is undertaken to choose individuals who possess the necessary skills, ethics, and competences to fulfill their assigned tasks. Furthermore, the agency ensures that the experts receive appropriate training and/or briefings to support their work effectively. To guarantee their independence, a mechanism is established to prevent any conflict of interest among the experts. The involvement of international experts, professional bodies' representatives and students in external quality assurance, as equal members of the EECs is advantageous and contributes to further development and advancement of CYQAA's implementation processes.

6.5 ESG STANDARD 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard 2.5

Criteria for outcomes: Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) provide the framework for all internal and external quality assurance processes undertaken and/or supervised by CYQAA. The criteria for outcomes employed by CYQAA, have been developed vis-a-vis the ESG standards. These criteria are published on the website of the agency and are used by institutions as part of their internal quality assurance processes as well as by external evaluation committees.

To facilitate internal and external evaluation processes, the Agency communicates the criteria for outcomes through guidelines¹⁸ and structured forms¹⁹, which are used by the evaluation committees. Guidelines and forms used by internal quality assurance committees include the same criteria that the external evaluation committee will be using, thus ensuring transparency and consistency across internal and external evaluations.

Criteria, communicated via guidelines and forms, cover all the areas of evaluation undertaken by the CYQAA (programmatic, departmental, institutional). In addition, the Agency provides specialized criteria regarding the mode of delivery of each program (conventional or e-learning). Specialized criteria are also applied when interuniversity or franchised programs are offered.

Focusing on the external evaluation processes, the CYQAA has established a process that safeguards consistency across different committees. This process includes the following steps:

- The criteria are sent to the External Evaluation Committees (EEC) members a month prior to the site visit.
- EEC members are thoroughly briefed by CYQAA officers before each site visit and are accompanied by an officer during the site visit.
- EEC members are expected to provide supporting evidence for their findings and suggestions.
- Institutions are expected to fill in a questionnaire²⁰ about the evaluation process. Feedback provided is used to check the clarity of criteria and the consistency of the processes applied across different evaluation committees.

¹⁸ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/evaluation-en/institution-department-programme-en>

¹⁹ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/evaluation-en/forms-en>

²⁰ [Higher Education Institution's Feedback on CYQAA External Evaluation Process](#)

- The External Evaluation Committees provide feedback to the Agency, through structured questionnaires that EEC members are asked to complete upon the conclusion of the evaluation.
- Personal communication with the CYQAA officers and written comments, functions as mechanism of change and of common understanding of the implementation of the criteria between the agency and the EEC members.

Formal decisions are communicated to the HEIs, are published on the official website of the Agency and on DEQAR.

Reflections:

Following a suggestion of the panel during the first review CYQAA now clearly states on its published procedure that “... accreditation can be granted in any case where an HEI has not fully implemented a minor recommendation made in an external evaluation report. In this case, the final report includes recommendations for further improvement.” This indicates a responsive and flexible approach to the implementation of recommendations from external evaluation reports. By explicitly stating that accreditation can still be granted even if minor recommendations have not been fully implemented, CYQAA recognizes that continuous improvement is a process that may require ongoing efforts. This approach suggests that CYQAA values the progress and efforts made by HEIs while also emphasizing the importance of addressing recommendations for further improvement.

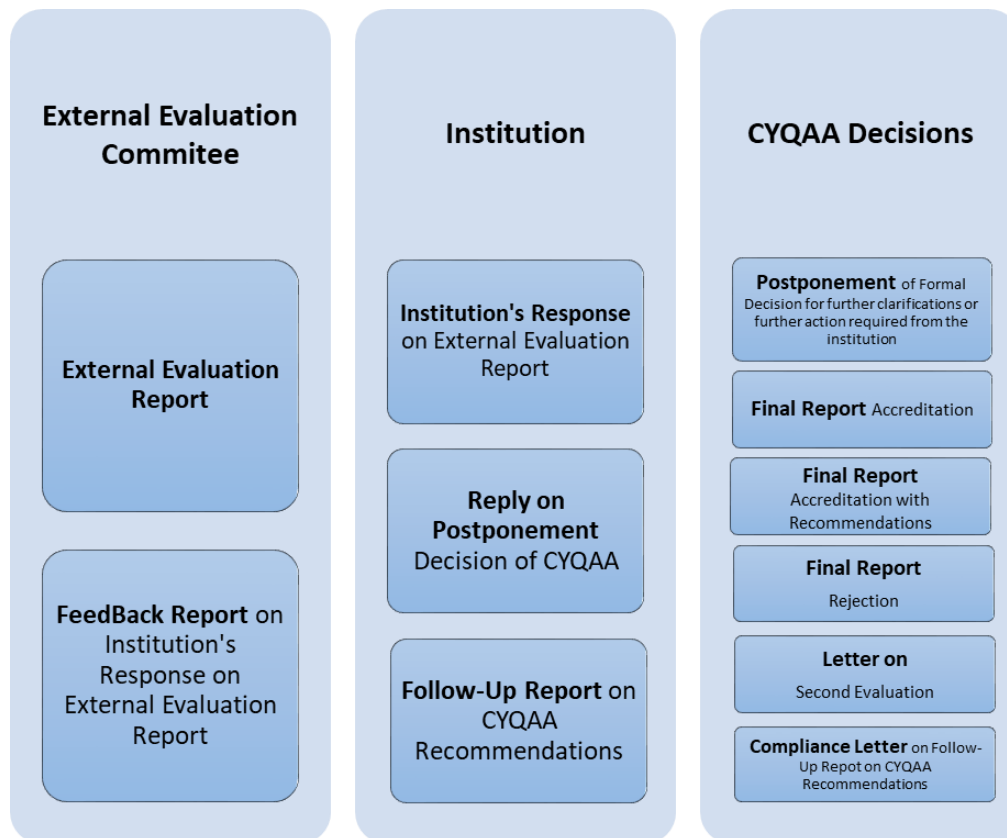
6.6 ESG STANDARD 2.6 REPORTING

Standard 2.6

Reporting: Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

CYQAA publishes all reports relevant to its QA activities, including the negative decisions, on its website. These reports include (1) the External Evaluation Report, which is produced by the EEC members, (2) the HEI's Response to the External Evaluation Report, and (3) the Final Report with the Council's decision. In cases where there are major issues i.e. curricular recommendations by the EEC, the Chair of the Council is authorized to forward the response of the HEI on the EEC recommendations, back to the EEC for feedback to the Agency. In this case the Feedback Report from the EEC is also published on the website. In some other cases the EEC's Feedback Report may be sent to the HEI for further commentary and action. In this case this document is also published. The following table illustrates the reports published on the website.

Figure 5: Documentation flow



All reports are published together on the relevant webpages on the Agency's website, which are separated into categories for easier accessibility depending on the type of external evaluation.

Each report is drafted on a specific fit-for-purpose template, which includes general information on the process (i.e., legal basis, relevant ESG, procedures). Specific templates contribute to the clarity of information, which is made available to the academic community, external partners, and other interested individuals.

Reflections:

The experts' report serves as the foundation for CYQAA's subsequent Council actions following the site visit, while also providing valuable information to interested parties regarding the institution's activities. To ensure that the report effectively informs decision-making, CYQAA created fit-for-purpose templates with a clear and concise structure and language. These templates encompass various crucial elements, including a description

of the institution's background, a comprehensive account of the evaluation procedure and the involved experts, thorough evidence, analysis, and findings, conclusive remarks, highlights of exemplary practices demonstrated by the institution, and recommendations for subsequent actions. There is also a short summary report conveying the essential points concisely. Thus, CYQAA enhances the usefulness and impact of the evaluation report, facilitating informed decision-making and promoting transparency in the higher education sector.

6.7 ESG STANDARD 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard 2.7

Complaints and appeals: Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

CYQAA has both a Complaints' Policy and an Appeals Procedure in Place:

Complaints' Policy:

Individuals or organizations that have substantiated concerns about an accredited institution's/department's/program's compliance with the Agency's external evaluation criteria and/or the ESG and/or the WFME standards may bring those to CYQAA's attention.

The scope of complaints extends beyond the above and encompasses the opportunity to address grievances pertaining to the manner in which a review is conducted or concerns regarding the processes implemented by the agency itself.

These complaints can be filed by various stakeholders, including students, faculty members, staff, or any individuals directly or indirectly affected by the higher education institution or the agency overseeing its operations.

The following steps are adhered to:

1. The CYQAA Council shall consider whether a complaint is substantiated. A complaint is considered if it is credible, substantiated, and supported by appropriate evidence, references, examples, etc. The complaints may only relate to an accredited institution's/department's/program's compliance with the Agency's external evaluation criteria and/or the ESG and/or the WFME standards, or the integrity of the external evaluation process on the basis of which CYQAA provided accreditation to the said

institution/department/program. Concerns regarding national legislation, European Union Law, or any other applicable rules shall be addressed with the competent courts or authorities.

2. If the complaint is not substantiated, the CYQAA will take no action on the complaint and inform the complainant accordingly.
3. If the complaint is substantiated CYQAA will inform the higher education institution of the complaint and if necessary ask the institution to provide clarifications or information related to it.
4. If the complaint is substantiated but relates to an isolated case and does not substantially affect the institution's/department's/program's compliance with the abovementioned standards, the CYQAA Council shall issue a formal warning to the institution. The warning does not affect the accreditation status of the institution/department/program. A formal warning statement is published on the entry of the institution/department/program on the Agency's website.
5. In the case the complaint is substantiated and leads to major concerns that the accredited institution/department/program no longer fulfils the criteria upon which accreditation was granted, the CYQAA Council shall examine, through the audit procedure, whether the accreditation criteria continue to be met according to article 17(3)(g) of the legislation.
6. In the case the audit procedure further substantiates the complaint and leads to major concerns that the accredited institution/department/program no longer fulfils the criteria upon which accreditation was granted, the CYQAA Council may decide to:
 - revoke the accreditation decision, or
 - initiate an external evaluation process of the institution/department/program.

In the scenarios (5) and (6) the HEI is invited to make representation before a final decision is made. The final decision is then communicated to the institution and the complainant and it is published.

Appeals Procedure:

On 10-11 June 2019, the Council of the CYQAA in its 43rd summit adopted the following Appeals Procedure, which elaborates on article 20(2) (g) (i) of the Law [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021]:

1. An appeal can be submitted to the Council of the CYQAA within one month from receipt of the decision of rejection.
2. The Agency's Council shall decide to either accept the appeal or reject it, considering it unsubstantiated or/ evidently based on grounds violating the Law.
3. If the Council decides to accept the appeal, it appoints a three-member Advisory Committee of Experts (ACE) that examines the grounds of the appeal. The appeal may only be based on those facts which are contained in the institutions' files and the Council's minutes. The members of the Advisory Committee sign the declaration of Absence of Conflict of Interest.

For the appointment of the Advisory Committee the Agency utilizes a pool of experts who contribute their expertise to the examination of appeals within their specific academic and/or professional field.

4. The Advisory Committee's examination shall be carried out based on the data contained in the evaluation file of the institution and the grounds set out in the appeal.
5. In case of lack of relevant information or need for clarification, the Advisory Committee may request further information from the Agency.
6. The Advisory Committee submits its report to the Council, within one month from the receipt of the file, containing the grounds of the appeal, the corresponding data available in the institution's file, and its justified observations in the light of the available evidence.
7. The Agency edits its final decision within two months from the receipt of the appeal and the institution has no right to submit a new appeal. The decisions of the Agency are subject to appeal to the Court only.

Table 11: Number of complaints and appeals and decisions (2018 – 2022)

	Summit number	Complaints	Decisions	Appeals	Decisions
2018	26	1	The Council decided to examine the matter further and respond to the complainant.	0	-

	27	0	-	2	The Council decided to accept the appeals.
	33	0	-	2	The Council decided to examine the two appeals during the next Summit due to time constraint.
	34	0	-	2 (plus 2 appeals from summit 33)	The Council decided to accept two of the appeals and reject the other two.
	35	0	-	1	The Council decided to reject the appeal.
	36	1	The Council decided to examine the matter.	1	The Council decided to reject the appeal.
	37	1	The Council decided to examine the matter.	0	-
Total		3		8	
2019	40	0	-	1	The Council examined the appeal and decided to inquire additional information before re-examining the appeal. The Council has rejected the appeal during the 41 st summit.
	41	2	In case of the first complaint the Council sent an official stringent recommendation for rectifying the prevailing circumstances. In case of the second complaint the Council decided to examine the matter further.	1	The Council decided to reject the appeal.
	43	1	The Council has responded to the complaint.	1	The Council decided to accept the appeal.
	44	1	The Council decided to examine the matter and to send an official recommendation for rectifying the prevailing circumstances.	0	-

	45	0	-	1	The Council decided to reject the appeal.
	48	1	The Council decided to examine the matter further.	0	-
Total		5		4	
2020	55	1	Send an official stringent recommendation for rectifying the prevailing circumstances.	0	-
	56	1	Send an official stringent recommendation for rectifying the prevailing circumstances.		
		1	The matter was formally referred to the police, for their attention, investigation, and subsequent action as they deem necessary and within the bounds of the law.		
Total		3		0	
2021	73	1	The Council decided to send an official recommendation for rectifying the prevailing circumstances.	0	-
	77	1	The Council decided to respond to the complainant.	0	
Total		2		0	
2022	80	1	The Council decided to further investigate the matter.	0	-
	81	1	Send an official recommendation for rectifying the prevailing circumstances.	0	-
	82	1	The Council decided to further investigate the matter.	0	-

	84			1	The Council decided to reject the appeal.
	85	1	The Council decided to further investigate the matter.	0	-
	88			1	The Council decided to reject the appeal.
		1		1	The Council decided to accept the appeal.
Total		5		3	

Reflections:

To uphold the rights of HEIs and promote equitable decision-making, CYQAA implements external quality assurance procedures with transparency and accountability. However, instances of dissatisfaction regarding the process or outcomes may arise. In order to address these concerns, CYQAA has drafted its relevant policies which are publicly available, to ensure that HEIs are enabled to raise issues of concern with the agency. Likewise, CYQAA is committed to handling such matters in a professional manner, employing a clearly defined and consistently applied process. This approach guarantees that any issues raised by institutions are treated with fairness, responsiveness, and adherence to established protocols, further fostering trust and confidence in the external quality assurance process.

7. OPINIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS

7.1 STAKEHOLDERS

CYQAA has a continuous collaborative relationship with all stakeholders with interest in its activities, which produces added value to all parties. Stakeholders engaging with CYQAA are provided below.

Decision Making stakeholders:

- Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth
- Committee for Education and Culture of the House of Representatives

In collaboration with the abovementioned stakeholders the CYQAA implements the government's strategic objective to establish Cyprus as a quality regional educational and research center. Together with these stakeholders, CYQAA makes sure that sufficient financial resources are secured for its operation in general and its external evaluation activities in particular.

Other local stakeholders are:

- HEIs
- Department of Higher Education
- The Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber
- Professional Associations and Boards of professions regulated by Law
- Registered associations of private schools
- The Ministries of the Republic of Cyprus
- The House of Representatives
- The Pancyprian Association of Students' Union (POFEN)
- The Youth Board of Cyprus, etc.

Overseas stakeholders are:

- ENQA
- EQAR
- WFME
- Quality assurance agencies in Europe and other countries
- International Experts – Members of CYQAA's EECs
- International experts – Invited by CYQAA to deliver workshops and seminars, etc.

7.2 COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

CYQAA safeguards that there are open channels of communication with stakeholders in higher education through the following activities:

- Organization of Conferences and Seminars
- Meetings with the representatives of organized higher education bodies
- Meetings with the representatives of HEIs
- Request for opinions and feedback in writing (i.e., regarding proposed legislation, regulations, and policies)
- Participation of representatives from professional bodies and associations in EECs according to the legislation
- Creation and distribution of a questionnaire to the members of the External Evaluation Committees (the questionnaire is anonymous and will be accessed every six months to safeguard anonymity)
- Creation and distribution of a questionnaire to HEIs (the questionnaire is anonymous)
- Invitation of stakeholders to the Council's summits

7.2.2 Conferences and Seminars

7.2.2.1 Student Information and Training Workshop for their Participation in the External Evaluation Process of CYQAA

On 17 April 2019, the Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education (CYQAA) organized successfully the information and training workshop for student participation in the external evaluation processes of the Agency.

In total, 18 students attended the workshop, which contributed towards a common understanding and interpretation of the external evaluation criteria, a better understanding of the role of the student during the evaluation process and the awareness on issues that may arise during the evaluation process.

The workshop' agenda included the following:

- Welcome Address by Prof. Andreas G. Orphanides - CYQAA Council Member
- Higher Education in Cyprus – Legal Framework for Quality Assurance by Erato Ioannou - CYQAA Higher Administrative Officer
- The external evaluation process and the evaluation criteria by Eleni Deligianni – CYQAA Education Officer and Alexia Pilakouri – CYQAA Education Officer
- The Voice of Experience, Terms of Reference and Principles of conduct and ethics by Anthi Prokopa – CYQAA Education Officer and George Aletraris – CYQAA Education Officer
- The Voice of Experience by George Longinos – Student (University of Cyprus)
- Question / Answer Session: Evaluation Criteria (understanding, implementation, evaluation scale) and Closing Remarks by Prof. Costas Christou - Vice President of the CYQAA Council

7.2.2.2 Experts information and training seminar in the area of building and technological infrastructure for their participation in the External Evaluation Procedures of CYQAA

On 3 July 2019, the Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), in collaboration with the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber (ETEK), organized successfully an information

and training seminar in the area of building and technological infrastructure for experts' participation in the External Evaluation Procedures of CYQAA. The training seminar took place at the Training and Cultural Center of ETEK.

The seminar was designed to provide a common understanding in regard to the evaluation criteria as well as guidance to the future members of EEC who are going to participate as experts in building and technological infrastructure.

Approximately, 60 civil engineers participated, who had the opportunity to learn about:

- the external evaluation criteria and their interpretation
- the expert's role concerning the building and technological infrastructures during the evaluation procedure
- the issues which could arise during the evaluation procedure.

7.2.2.3 Strengthening Institutions for Quality Assurance - "Seminar on Institutional Evaluation" - 13/09/2019

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), within the framework of its mission to support, through the procedures provided by the relevant legislation, the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programs of study, organized the seminar "Institutional Evaluation."

The seminar took place **on 13 September 2019 at Cleopatra Hotel in Nicosia** and it was addressed to administrative and academic personnel of the institutions who are involved in the preparation of their applications for institutional evaluation (2 representatives from each institution).

The seminar contributed toward a common understanding and interpretation of external evaluation criteria in general and those relevant to building and technological infrastructures in particular.

7.2.2.4 Strengthening Institutions for Quality Assurance – "Seminar on Quality Assurance of Distance Learning (E-Learning) Programs of Study" - 20/09/2019

On 20 September 2019, the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), held at its offices in Nicosia a "Seminar on Quality Assurance of Distance Learning (E-Learning) Programs of Study." More than thirty (30) administrative and academic personnel of higher education institutions who are involved in the design of distance learning programs participated.

Participants had the opportunity to learn about the requirements of distance learning programs of study and the development of study guides, as well as to identify the necessary standards to ensure their quality.

The seminar mainly focused on the following:

- Defining distance learning
- The philosophical basis of distance learning programs - Technology and Epistemology - The experience so far
- Methodology and Interaction (Student-student, student-teacher, student-learning material)
- Teachers and Teaching/Diversification
- Quality characteristics of the supporting educational material
- Assignments and final examination

7.2.2.5 Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment:

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), within its mission to support the procedures provided by the relevant legislation for the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programs of study, successfully organized a two-day hybrid Seminar on "Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment."

The keynote speakers and coordinators of the workshops were Sabine Hoidn (University of St. Gallen and University of Zurich) and Manja Klemenčič (Harvard University), experts in student-centered teaching and learning. Other experts from Europe and the US delivered their presentations online.

The Minister of Education, Sport and Youth as well as the President of the Council of CYQAA addressed the seminar. The Minister emphasized that the issue of ensuring the quality of higher education is considered as one of the priorities of the Ministry and congratulated the President, the Vice President and the Council Members of CYQAA for taking the initiative in organizing the seminar. The President of the Council referred to the great importance that should be given to student-centered teaching and learning, highlighting the basic measures which should be implemented by the coordinators for its achievement.

More than one hundred representatives from all higher education institutions in Cyprus attended the seminar and familiarized themselves with good practices and with tools and procedures, aiming at cultivating skills for enhancing the role of the student in the learning process.

There was positive feedback from the participants with regards to the organizing as well as the value of the seminar and the presenters.

7.3 SURVEYS

CYQAA conducts surveys to collect feedback and opinions from its stakeholders such as HEIs and members of the EECs. The relevant questionnaires are distributed after the conduct of external evaluations. It is noted that answering these questionnaires is not mandatory but stakeholders are informed that their responses will help the Agency reach reliable conclusions as per *the quality and consistency of its EQA activities*.

The results presented in summary below concern the period of evaluations for the first half of 2023. A detailed analysis of both questionnaires is attached as an ANNEX to this SAR.

7.3.1 Analysis of Feedback by Experts – Members of the EECs

The vast majority of Experts praised the work done at CYQAA and marked as excellent the parameters included in the questionnaire regarding the quality of,

- communication with the responsible CYQAA officer prior to the designated site visit
- of briefing by the responsible CYQAA officer before your visit to the Institution under evaluation
- adequacy of information in the Institution's application for evaluation
- CYQAA guidelines for the drafting of the External Evaluation Report
- the External Evaluation Report template
- time allowed to complete and submit the External Evaluation Report

In their comments, respondents praised the Agency's professionalism in terms of organization, communication, provision of information and made comments such as "communication with CYQAA's representative was exemplary, professional and reliable, both before the committee's work was carried out and also when it was in progress," "An excellent experience driven by a professional team with clear communication from start to finish," and CYQAA meets the highest standards regarding the evaluation process.

However, some of the respondents felt that the site-visit schedule was very tight. CYQAA has reflected on this and tried to increase the length of the site-visit. This constituted a problem to securing the best experts for the external evaluations as they are persons with very busy schedules and professional obligations in their countries of origin. The travelling time to Cyprus and back is consuming the time which would have otherwise been utilized for the site-visit as well as the writing of the report.

The evaluation template is comprehensive but is technically a very complex Word document, making it hard for several people to edit it simultaneously. Simultaneous editing is the only way to complete the report satisfactorily in the allotted time. CYQAA has moved toward this direction since is at this time conducting an

analysis charting its operations in order to proceed with the creation of an electronic system for all its procedures.

The electronic system of the Agency should cover the following needs:

- Workplace for the submission and evaluation of applications for the accreditation of Institutions, Departments and Programs (Procedures Portal)
- Electronic file for the storage and creation of documents of the Agency
- Website for the general public

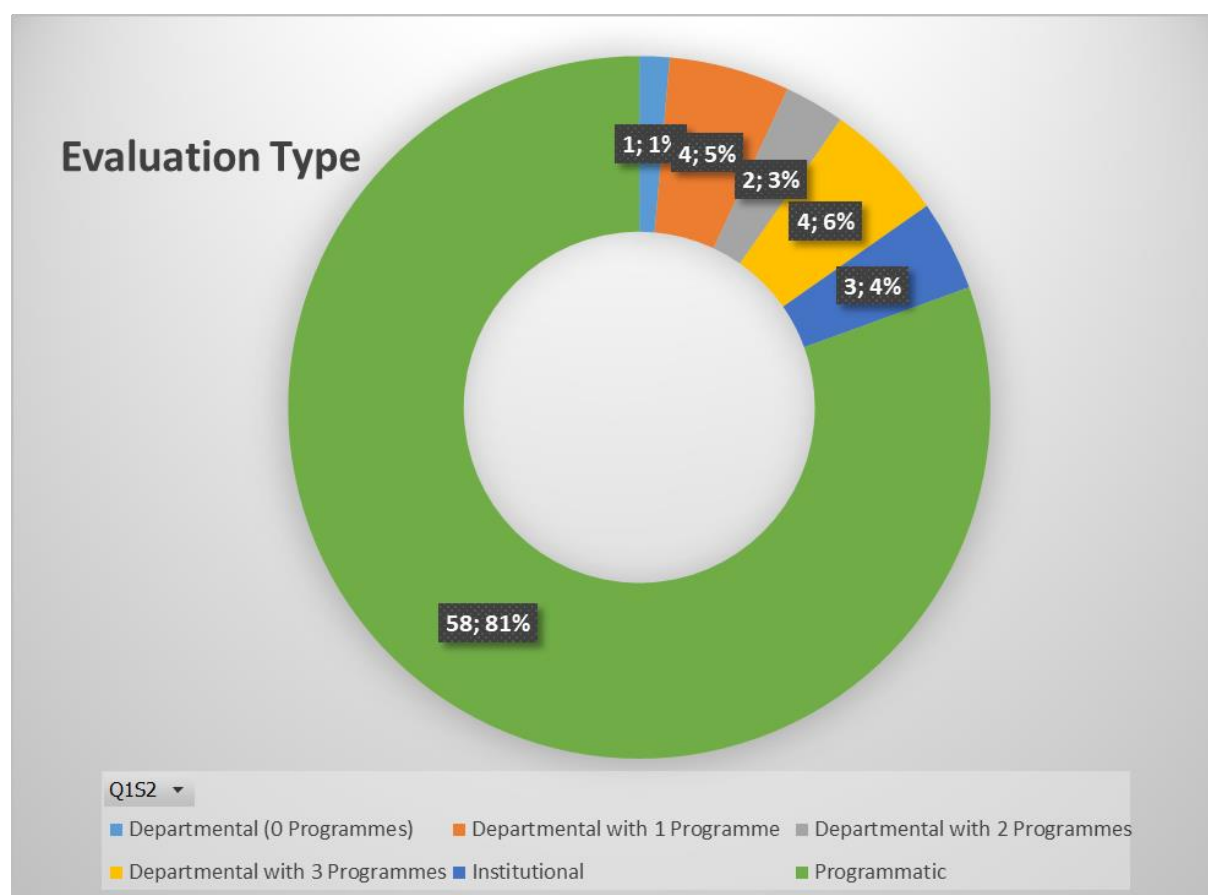
The Procedures Portal will include all functions related to the process of submitting and evaluating an application for the accreditation of Institutions / Departments / Programs, including the drafting of the report as well as other supporting procedures (e.g. document archiving, meeting management).

7.3.2 Analysis of Feedback from HEIs

HEIs were invited to provide the Agency with their feedback and opinions after the conduct of each external evaluation (Institutional / Departmental / Programmatic). The questionnaire was developed within the framework of CYQAA's effort to actively involve HEIs in the process of continuous upgrading and development of quality assurance of higher education and in order to safeguard the quality of its processes.

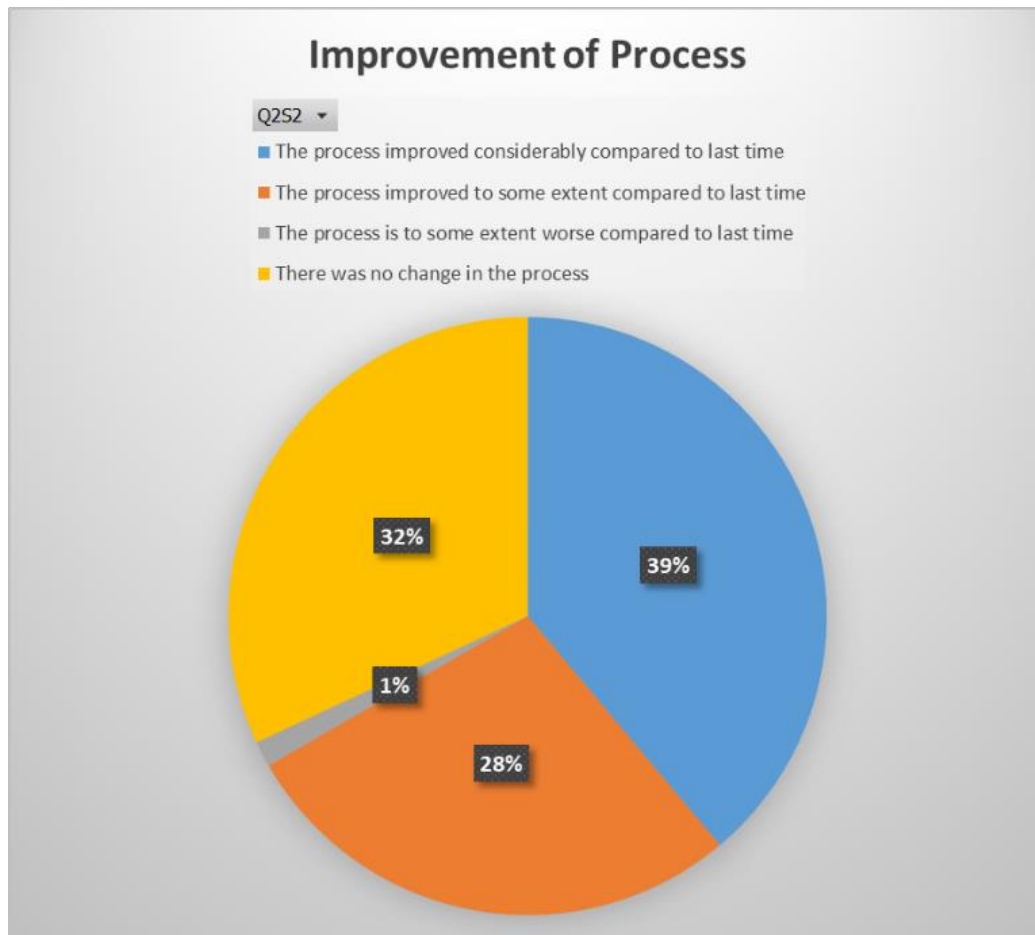
The questionnaires were completed by the coordinator of the program for programmatic evaluation and/or president of the Department for departmental evaluation and/or rector of the institution for institutional evaluation).

Figure 6: External evaluations conducted by CYQAA by type



The majority of HEIs reported considerable improvement since the last time an external evaluation was conducted:

Figure 7: HEI's feedback on process



However, in their comments, HEIs voiced some concerns as per the time constraints of the site-visit. As noted in the previous section CYQAA has reflected on this and tried to increase the length of the site-visit. This constituted a problem to securing the best experts for the external evaluations as they are persons with very busy schedules and professional obligations in their countries of origin. The travelling time to Cyprus and back is consuming the time which would have otherwise been utilized for the site-visit as well as the writing of the report. The Agency hopes that these constraints will be substantially remedied with the simultaneous writing and editing of the report on the new electronic system.

Another important parameter that HEIs were invited to state their opinions on the Agency's templates for reporting. Again, the vast majority 63 respondents stated that the templates provided all necessary

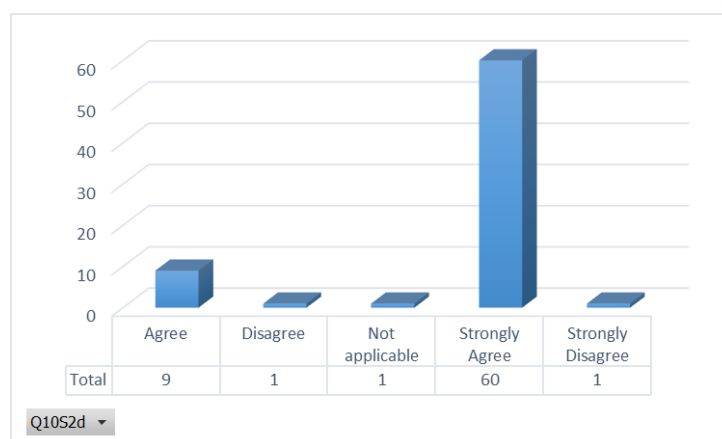
information for their external evaluation and only 9 stated that they provided a moderate but sufficient amount of information for their external evaluation.

As for the degree of effectiveness of the various aspects of CYQAA's external evaluation process HEIs reported the following:

- Clarity of the whole application process (satisfied 67, somewhat satisfied 5)
- Transparency of external evaluation criteria and their interpretation (satisfied 63 – dissatisfied 1)
- Proportionate, consistent and fair decision-making (satisfied 60 – dissatisfied 1)
- Information on the CYQAA website (satisfied 64, somewhat satisfied 8)
- Communication with the Agency before the site-visit (satisfied 71, somewhat satisfied 1)
- Overall coordination of the external evaluation on behalf of CYQAA (satisfied 71, somewhat satisfied 1)

Through the questionnaire, HEIs were asked to provide feedback on the various parameters of the quality of the EEC ranging from the EEC's professional conduct, to its skills, and its knowledge of international QA and the ESG, amongst others. An overall satisfaction is indicated by the feedback of the vast majority of HEI's (over 55 respondents) regarding all parameters. It is highlighted, however, that HEIs reported that the EEC clearly demonstrated good knowledge of international quality assurance in higher education and of the ESG.

Figure 8: CYQAA experts and their knowledge of the ESG according to HEIs



8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MAIN FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS REVIEW(S) AND AGENCY'S RESULTING FOLLOW-UP (FOR SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT REVIEWS ONLY)

At its meeting on 28 April 2020, the Board of ENQA considered the follow-up report arising from the external review of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) in 2018. The Board approves the report and takes note of the progress that has been made.

At the same time, the Board asks the agency to inform ENQA of the implementation of the upcoming legal provisions in the country that relate to ESG 3.3 Independence and ESG 2.7. Complaints and Appeals.²¹

8.1 ENQA RECOMMENDATION - ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

CYQAA is recommended to revise its mission statement to incorporate its compliance assurance aim alongside that of supporting quality improvement in higher education; and devise a detailed two-year activity plan to guide effectively its activities towards the aims set.

Action taken by CYQAA

Since the last ENQA review CYQAA has revised its mission statement as follows:

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), is the competent independent authority responsible to safeguard standards and to support, through the procedures provided by the relevant legislation and the principles underlying the establishment of the European Higher Education Area, the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programs of study, in order to comply with the ESG and the European policy for

²¹ https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Board-letter-follow-up-report_CYQAA.pdf

*mobility and mutual qualification recognition. It also aims at promoting quality culture within the higher education institutions in Cyprus.*²²

Based on CYQAA's vision and mission, the CYQAA Council has specified the Agency's strategic pillars, as well as its strategic goals and priorities for the Agency's second tenure during 2020-2025. Quantifiable performance indicators are specified for the purpose of systematic monitoring and assessing of how the Agency's goals and priorities are being met, and for purposes of planning for the Agency's further development.²³

Please see also Chapter 5.1 (p. 26).

8.2 ENQA RECOMMENDATION - ESG 3.3 OFFICIAL STATUS

CYQAA is recommended to discuss with its stakeholders how the procedure for the appointment and dismissal of the Council can be amended so that it is not perceived as providing space for interference of the national authorities; be fully separated from the Ministry of Education and Culture [now Ministry of Education Sport and Youth] in organizational terms, including the staff recruitment process and financial services.

Action taken by CYQAA

Appointment and dismissal of the Council

In 2019 CYQAA invited its stakeholders, including HEI's, to the discussions of various amendments in the existing Law. The stakeholders' views were submitted in writing and during formal roundtable discussions organized by the Agency at its offices in Nicosia. It is highlighted that none of the stakeholders expressed the

²² <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/cyqaa-en/about-us-en>

²³ https://dipae.ac.cy/archeia/StrategicPlan/Strategic_plan_2020_2025_en.pdf

view that the provision of the Law regarding the procedure for the appointment and dismissal of the Council can be perceived as providing space for interference of the national authorities. CYQAA collected the views of all stakeholders, evaluated alternative solutions and choices, examined procedures and practices of its counterpart quality assurance bodies in Europe and decided to adopt those stakeholder views which serve public interest and quality assurance in higher education.

It is highlighted that the current law provides for the stakeholders' (Rectors' Council, Student Unions, Professional Bodies etc) involvement in the selection Council members, as they are appointed following stakeholder consultation. This indicates that the input and perspectives of stakeholders are taken into account when deciding on Council members. It is also noted that the President and the Vice President of the Council are elected by the members of the Council.

Amongst other things, amendments to the Law aimed to implement the ENQA review panel's recommendations in regard to (a) the appointment and dismissal of the Council and (b) CYQAA's separation from the Ministry organizational terms.

The amending Law was withdrawn from the House of Representatives in 2021 and it was decided that CYQAA drafts a new more focused towards its independence amending Law. It is noted that since 3 Ministers have changed.

CYQAA responded with the preparation of an amending Law exclusively on the recommendation for separation from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. The draft, which is at this time processed by the Legal Service of the Republic, provides for the Agency's independence in organizational terms, including the staff recruitment process and financial services. The draft of law includes, amongst others, provisions for the Agency's competency to,

- (i) perform any act entailed by the fulfillment of its purposes under this Law or undertaken or likely to be undertaken by or against legal persons governed by public Law;
- (ii) sue and be sued;
- (iii) accept, purchase, and possess movable or immovable property;

- (iv) acquire by lease, exchange, gift or in any other way immovable or movable property;
- (iii) to sell, exchange, donate, lease, assign, mortgage or encumber his property or in any way dispose of any of his movable or immovable property, which upon its abolition becomes the property of the State; and
- (iv) to recruit scientific or other personnel as specified in Regulations.

Within the framework of the new Law, fees payable by HEIs for external evaluation will be deposited to the Agency's accounts and will be included in its budget as income.

At this time and since its establishment, in 2015 the Agency's independence was never at stake as it is safeguarded by the current Law. The decisions of the Council are unbiased and final. Council members operate within the published "Code of Deontology and absence of Conflict of Interest." The decisions of the Council are not subject to approval by the Minister like it was the case of the quality assurance bodies before CYQAA.

It terms of Finances, since 2019 in the relevant Law governing the State Budget, CYQAA has a separate budget where quality assurance is stated as a key strategic objective as follows:

The sixth strategic objective is to strengthen and upgrade higher education, with the aim of ensuring quality in higher education, which is implemented through Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education [...]

The emphasis is placed on the fact that the budget of CYQAA is independent and cannot be modified without the explicit approval of the CYQAA Council.

8.3 ENQA RECOMMENDATION - ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

CYQAA is recommended to introduce the practice of analyzing systematically the material collected in its external quality assurance activities and publishing regularly its findings to provide inputs to national policies, support institutions in the development of internal quality assurance and aid its own Reflections on its external quality assurance processes.

Action taken by CYQAA

The Agency has established a process for analyzing the External Evaluation Committees' Reports, reflecting on them and publishing the main trends and quality indicators of higher education in Cyprus. One member of staff has been assigned to collect and initial analysis of the experts' findings and recommendations. A second staff member assigned for inter-rate agreement.

A report of the initial findings are presented at the end of each academic semester/year to the Council for Reflections, further elaboration on the programs' and institutions' compliance with ESG, their differentiation in quality, attainment of the expected progress and compliance with the ESG.

The thematic analysis reports are published on the Agency's website²⁴ for institutions' and other stakeholders' reflections\ on difficulties and on positive trends.

1. Student Assessment: Trends and Dominant Issues September 2018, September 2021
2. PhD Program's Evaluation September 2015 – September 2020
3. E-learning Masters' programs' evaluation: Trends and Dominant Issues, February 2019 – February
4. Master E-learning programs' evaluation: Trends and Dominant Issues, January 2016 – January 2019
5. Master programs' Evaluation: Trends and Dominant Issues, September 2017 – September 2018
6. Colleges' Short Cycle Programs' Evaluation: Trends and Dominant Issues, September 2017 – September 2018

Please see also Chapter 5.3 (p. 37)

²⁴ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/thematic-analysis-en/thematic-analysis-en>

8.4 ENQA RECOMMENDATION - ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

CYQAA is recommended to rely increasingly on formal rather than informal mechanisms for feedback collection and improve its current mechanism for collecting feedback after each evaluation (a response submitted by each institution) so that institutions are explicitly requested to provide feedback and do so in a structured way.

Action taken by CYQAA

CYQAA relies on formal procedures in regard to receiving feedback for the quality of its operations including internal quality assurance and professional conduct.

Surveys:

In an effort to actively involve HEIs in the continuous upgrading of quality assurance and accreditation procedures, the Agency utilizes survey questionnaires²⁵ to collect information from HEIs which have undergone external evaluation.

CYQAA within the framework of its Internal Quality Assurance and its commitment to the continuous improvement of its quality assurance processes invites experts (members of External Evaluation Committees) to provide feedback through questionnaires.²⁶

From the Higher Education Institution's Feedback on CYQAA External Evaluation Process collected for evaluations conducted during the first half of 2023 respondents reported that the process improved considerably or it improved to some extent compared to the last time.

Please see Chapter 7.3 (p. 88) and **ANNEX I**.

²⁵ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/el/hefeedback-online-form>

²⁶ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/4-11-2022-experts-feedback-on-the-process-of-the-evaluation-accreditation-of-internal-quality-assurance-systems>

Seminars and Structured roundtable discussions:

Institutions of higher education participate in various seminars and structured roundtable discussions Organized by CYQAA.²⁷ These activities aim for the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programs of study and serve as fora for the exchange of ideas, fruitful discussion, and for providing the CYQAA with feedback for its procedures.

8.5 ENQA RECOMMENDATION - ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

CYQAA is recommended to incorporate into its standards the few aspects of Part 1 of the ESG, including external stakeholder involvement, which are currently not or not explicitly addressed; and gradually shift the focus in its processes after the first accreditation cycle from controlling institutions to supporting them in carrying their responsibility for quality and in quality improvement, with due consideration to be given to the effectiveness of internal quality assurance

Action taken by CYQAA

CYQAA has explicitly incorporated into its standards all the aspects of Part 1 of the ESG including external stakeholder involvement. CYQAA's various templates²⁸ have been amended to this end:

Doc. num. 300.1.1 – External Evaluation Report (Programmatic)

Doc. num. 300.1.2 - Higher Education Institution's Response -Program of study

²⁷ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/news-and-events/events>

²⁸ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/evaluation-en/forms-en>

Doc. num. 300.1.3 - Feedback report from EEC experts -Program of study

Doc. num. 300.1.4 - Follow-up Report (for a CYQAA externally evaluated program of study)

Doc. num. 300.2.1 – External Evaluation Report (Institutional)

Doc. num. 300.3.1 – External Evaluation Report (Departmental)

Please see Chapter 6 (p. 54 – 58) for the detailed mapping of the ESG and CYQAA quality indicators/criteria and the following sections including a discussion on enhancing and supporting HEIs internal quality assurance processes.

CYQAA is already taking those measures necessary to include processes which provide support to HEIs in carrying their responsibility for quality and in quality improvement, with due consideration to be given to the effectiveness of internal quality assurance. The following are examples of these processes.

Seminars and Conferences²⁹:

HEI's are invited to participate in various seminars and conferences organized by CYQAA. These activities aim for the continuous improvement and upgrading of HEIs and their programs of study and serve as fora for the exchange of ideas and fruitful discussion.

For 2023 CYQAA has scheduled the following:

- Seminar of Academic Integrity
- Seminar on student assessment

²⁹ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/news-and-events/events>

8.6 ENQA RECOMMENDATION - ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

CYQAA is recommended to expand the focus of the follow-up stage in its evaluations to embrace not only control-oriented measures but also support for quality improvement; give more consideration to the specificity of joint programs in its briefings for experts to ensure full consistency in conducting evaluations; and take steps to include a site visit and a follow-up in the assessment of conditions for the provision of cross-border education by foreign HEIs

Action taken by CYQAA

Based on ENQA's recommendation, CYQAA has created Document number 300.1.4 "Follow-up Report (for a CYQAA externally evaluated program of study)." This procedure is based on the principle that, "External quality assurance does not end with the report by the experts (EEC Report). The EEC Report provides clear guidance for institutional action."³⁰

CYQAA has a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution toward the improvement and further development.

The Follow-up Report, drafted on behalf of the institution, should recount, synoptically, institutional action taken toward the improvement of areas indicated in the EEC Report and the CYQAA Final Report.

- It follows the structure of assessment areas and focuses on the problem areas indicated in the EEC Report and in the CYQAA Final Report.
- Provides evidence (via website links) on how the recommendations of the External Evaluation Committee and/or the Council of CYQAA have been adhered to.

³⁰ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/evaluation-en/forms-en>

- Is expected to contain “Institutional action taken for improvement on the basis of its own internal evaluation procedures.”

CYQAA gives more consideration to the specificity of joint programs in its briefings for experts to ensure full consistency in conducting evaluations. Toward this aim, during the briefing special attention is paid to the section regarding joint programs in the EEC Report template and the standards included in the report:

- The joint program 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 program is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design, delivery and further development of the program.
- The terms and conditions of the joint program are officially stated in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:
 - Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the program
 - Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organization, 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 program.

- Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.

The EEC experts are also invited to consider questions such as the following:

- Does the joint study program conform to the requirements of a study program offered at the specific level?
- Is there a system that assures the quality of joint provision and guarantees that the aims of the program are met?
- Do the mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the joint study program take into consideration the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG)? Are they adopted by all the universities involved?
- Is the division of responsibilities in ensuring quality clearly defined among the partner universities?
- Is relevant information about the program, e.g., admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures, well documented and published by taking into account the specific needs of students?
- What is the added value of the program of study?
- Is there a sustainable funding strategy among the partner universities? Explain.

The template is Doc. Number 300.1.1.³¹

Please see Chapter 6.3.

³¹ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/evaluation-en/forms-en>

8.7 ENQA RECOMMENDATION - ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

CYQAA is recommended to publish the selection procedure and criteria for all categories of experts on its website; provide additional training to students to prepare them to contribute to all relevant evaluation areas, including student involvement in internal quality assurance and student-centered learning.

Action taken by CYQAA

The Agency, since its establishment, has established selection criteria for the members of the External Evaluation Committees (experts). This is also verified by the ENQA panel of experts which notes on p. 41 of the Review Report³² that “The selection criteria for academic experts are clearly defined and set the bar high, so those included in the pool can indeed be expected to have all the necessary expertise;”

Upon recommendation of the Review Panel, CYQAA has proceeded with the publication of the procedure and the criteria for the selection of all categories of experts, including students, on its website.³³

Additionally, the Agency has launched a call for international experts for its forthcoming external evaluations which was published on the ENQA website.³⁴

The participation of student experts in the Agency’s External Evaluation Committees (EECs) is provided by Law and thus students are equal to the rest of the members and they have the same terms of reference, responsibilities, rights and obligations. This is evident by the following established procedures of the Agency: The document “Guidelines for the Members of External Evaluation Committees” is sent to all the members of the EEC, including the students, together with the invitation to participate in the EEC. This document contains, amongst others, the “Responsibilities of the EEC Members.”³⁵

³² <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/CYQAA-External-Review-Report.pdf>

³³ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/experts-en>

³⁴ <https://www.enqa.eu/news/cyqaa-calls-for-international-experts/>

³⁵ https://www.dipae.ac.cy/archeia/entypa/600_I_Guidelines_2.pdf

Furthermore, as part of the external evaluation procedure, all the relevant documents (application, institution's self-assessment, etc.) are sent to all the members of the EEC, student experts included, to be studied before the site visit.

Additionally, students are obliged to participate in the Orientation and Briefing Session conducted by the Agency before the site visit. They receive the same information, directions, and clarifications as the rest of the members of the EEC.

The student expert is actively present and her/his terms of reference prescribe that he/she should contribute during all stages of external evaluation (studying the material, preliminary meeting of the EEC, briefing, site visit, drafting of the report, possible feedback requested from the EEC by the CYQAA Council).

Within the recommendation of the panel for additional training to students to prepare them to contribute to all relevant evaluation areas, including student involvement in internal quality assurance and student-centered learning, the Agency organized the following seminars:

- Student Information and Training Workshop for their Participation in the External Evaluation Process of CYQAA – 19 April 2019³⁶

This information and training workshop organized especially for the student experts and was designed specifically for effective student involvement in the EECs. Presentations included, amongst others, guidance regarding all stages and all areas in the external evaluation procedure as well as guidelines on the feedback requested on their behalf on all the standards and criteria included in the external evaluation report:

- Seminar on Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment - 6 and 7 September 2022³⁷

³⁶ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/news-and-events/events/392-student-information-and-training-workshop-for-their-participation-in-the-external-evaluation-process-of-cyqaa-2>

³⁷ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/el/nea-ekdiloseis/ekdiloseis-el/663-29-08-2022-seminario-me-thema-energitiki-didaskalia-mathisi-kai-axiologisi-me-epikentro-ton-foititi-tin-foititria>

CYQAA, within its mission to support the procedures provided by the relevant legislation for the continuous improvement and upgrading of HEIs and their programs of study, has successfully organized a two-day hybrid Seminar on “Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment.”

The keynote speakers and coordinators of the workshops were Sabine Hoidn (University of St. Gallen and University of Zurich) and Manja Klemenčič (Harvard University), experts in student-centered teaching and learning. Other experts from Europe and the US delivered their presentations online.

Please see Chapter 6.3.

8.8 ENQA RECOMMENDATION - ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

CYQAA is recommended to develop more detailed and written guidelines for experts to ensure greater consistency in scoring; state more explicitly in its decision-making procedure whether accreditation can be granted in any case where an HEI has not fully implemented a minor recommendation made in an external evaluation report.

Action taken by CYQAA

In order to ensure greater consistency in scoring, CYQAA has developed detailed written guidelines which are included in the “External Evaluation Report” template³⁸ (for all types of programs, i.e., e-learning, conventional, joint, undergraduate, and postgraduate). The document now includes “Guidelines on content and structure of the report” as follows:

- The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.
- At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:

³⁸ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/evaluation-en/forms-en>

(a) sub-areas

(b) standards which are relevant to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG)

(c) some questions that EEC may find useful.

- The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.
- Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.

- The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.
- The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.

Following ENQA's recommendation CYQAA now states explicitly in its decision-making procedure and in its final report whether accreditation can be granted in any case where an HEI has not fully implemented a minor recommendation made in an external evaluation report. These recommendations are recorded in the Council's Final Reports published on its website.³⁹

Please see Chapter 6.5.

8.9 ENQA RECOMMENDATION – ESG 2.6 REPORTING

CYQAA is recommended to put in place a mechanism to ensure that all external evaluation reports are of comparably high quality in terms of evidence to substantiate scores, comments being specific and consistency between scores and comments, and give due consideration to the effectiveness of internal quality assurance; provide space in the evaluation report template to address the specificity of joint programs; introduce an annex to an external evaluation report for experts to comment on the implementation of recommendations by institutions, and to be published together with a report; and publish all reports, including those leading to refusal of accreditation, in addition to those currently available on its website.

Action taken by CYQAA

CYQAA ensures that all external evaluation reports are of comparably high quality in terms of evidence to substantiate scores, comments being specific, having consistency between scores and comments, and giving

³⁹ <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/accreditation-en/accredited-programmes-short-cycle-en>
<https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/accreditation-en/accredited-programmes-bachelor-en>
<https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/accreditation-en/accredited-programmes-med-en>
<https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/accreditation-en/accredited-programmes-master-en>
<https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/accreditation-en/accredited-programmes-doctorate-en>
<https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/accreditation-en/rejected-programmes-en>

due consideration to the effectiveness of internal quality assurance. To this end, all external evaluation reports have been modified as explained in the previous section.

Additionally, the following consist of standard procedures to achieve these aims:

- Written Guidelines for external evaluation published on the Agency's website⁴⁰
- "Orientation and Briefing of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC)" published on the Agency's website⁴¹

Online meetings with the members of the EEC before their arrival to Cyprus.

- CYQAA Officer coordinating the external evaluation responds to questions in regard to the external evaluation procedures in writing via e-mail.
- Face-to-face meeting upon arrival to Cyprus

Upon the panel's recommendation to address the specificity of joint programs CYQAA has created the following templates:

- 300.1.1/3 External Evaluation Report (Conventional - Joint program of study)
- 300.1.1/4 External Evaluation Report (E-learning - Joint program of study)

All reports, including those leading to refusal of accreditation, are published on the Agency's website.

⁴⁰ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/experts-en>

⁴¹ http://www.dipae.ac.cy/archeia/experts/Orientation%20and%20briefing%20of%20the%20EEC_en.pdf

Figure 9: Reports published on the Agency's website



THE CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Home / Evaluation / Forms

Forms

#	Title
100.1.1	Fees for Evaluation - Accreditation of Programme of Study Καταβολή των τελών Προγραμματικής Αξιολόγησης - Πιστοποίησης
100.1.2	Fees for Evaluation - Accreditation of Institute /Department Καταβολή των τελών Ιδρυματικής / Τμηματικής Αξιολόγησης - Πιστοποίησης
100.1.3	Fees for Evaluation - Accreditation of Programme of Study Καταβολή των τελών Αξιολόγησης - Πιστοποίησης προγράμματος σπουδών που προσφέρεται με τη μέθοδο...

INSTITUTIONS

- Accredited Institutions
- Rejected Institutions

DEPARTMENTS

- Accredited Departments
- Rejected Departments

PROGRAMMES

- Short Cycle Degree (Certification, Diploma, Higher Diploma) Accredited Programmes
- Bachelor Degree Accredited Programmes
- Accredited Programmes in Medicine
- Master Degree Accredited Programmes
- Integrated Master's Degree Accredited Programmes
- Doctorate Degree Accredited Programmes
- Programmes accredited within the previous Legislative Framework
- Rejected Programmes

Please see Chapter 6.6.

8.10 ENQA RECOMMENDATION - ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

CYQAA is recommended to establish a separate committee of experts for considering appeals against its accreditation decisions to ensure full transparency (as proposed in the amendments to the legislation already drafted); include the possibility of appealing against its decisions in the procedure for the assessment of conditions for the provision of cross-border education by foreign HEIs; and integrate current practices into a clearly defined complaints procedure.

Action taken by CYQAA

On 10-11 June 2019, the Council of the CYQAA in its 43rd summit adopted the following Appeals Procedure which elaborates on article 20(2) (g) (i) of the Law:

1. An appeal can be submitted to the Council of the CYQAA within one month from receipt of the decision of rejection.

2. *The Agency's Council shall decide to either accept the appeal or reject it, considering it unsubstantiated or/ evidently based on grounds violating the Law.*
3. *If the Council decides to accept the appeal appoints a three-member Advisory Committee of Experts (ACE) which examines the grounds of the appeal. The appeal may only be based on those facts which are contained in the institutions' files and the Council's minutes. The members of the Advisory Committee sign the declaration of Absence of Conflict of Interest.*

For the appointment of the Advisory Committee the Agency utilizes a pool of experts who contribute their expertise to the examination of appeals within their specific academic and/or professional field.

4. *The Advisory Committee's examination shall be carried out based on the data contained in the evaluation file of the institution and the grounds set out in the appeal.*
5. *In case of lack of relevant information or need for clarification, the Advisory Committee may request further information from the Agency.*
6. *The Advisory Committee submits its report to the Council, within one month from the receipt of the file, containing the grounds of the appeal, the corresponding data available in the institution's file and its justified observations in the light of the available evidence.*
7. *The Agency edits its final decision within two months from the receipt of the appeal and the institution has no right to submit a new appeal. The decisions of the Agency are subject to appeal to the Court only.*

The procedure has been approved by the stakeholders, published on the Agency's website.⁴²

CYQAA procedures regarding appeals include the possibility of appealing against its decisions in the procedure for the assessment of conditions for the provision of cross-border education by foreign HEIs since the Agency is the competent authority responsible for cross-border education.

⁴² <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/cyqaa-en/appeals-procedure-en>

Complaints' Policy⁴³

Individuals or organisations that have substantiated concerns about an accredited institution's/department's/programme's compliance with the Agency's external evaluation criteria and/or the ESG and/or the WFME standards may bring those to CYQAA's attention.

The scope of complaints extends beyond the above and encompasses the opportunity to address grievances pertaining to the manner in which a review is conducted or concerns regarding the processes implemented by the agency itself.

These complaints can be filed by various stakeholders, including students, faculty members, staff, or any individuals directly or indirectly affected by the higher education institution or the agency overseeing its operations.

The following steps are followed:

1. The CYQAA Council shall consider whether a complaint is substantiated. A complaint will only be considered if it is credible, substantiated, and supported by appropriate evidence, references, examples etc. The complaints may only relate to an accredited institution's/department's/programme's compliance with the Agency's external evaluation criteria and/or the ESG and/or the WFME standards, or the integrity of the external evaluation process on the basis of which CYQAA provided accreditation to the said institution/department/programme. Concerns regarding national legislation, European Union Law, or any other applicable rules shall be addressed with the competent courts or authorities.
2. If the complaint is not substantiated the CYQAA will take no action on the complaint and inform the complainant accordingly.

⁴³ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/cyqaa-en/complaints-policy-en>

3. If the complaint is substantiated CYQAA will inform the higher education institution of the complaint and will ask the institution to provide clarifications or information related to it.
4. If the complaint is substantiated but relates to an isolated case and does not substantially affect the institution's/department's/programme's compliance with the abovementioned standards, the CYQAA Council shall issue a formal warning to the institution. The warning does not affect the accreditation status of the institution/department/programme. A formal warning statement is published on the entry of the institution/department/programme on the Agency's website.
5. In the case the complaint is substantiated and leads to major concerns that the accredited institution/department/programme no longer fulfils the criteria upon which accreditation was granted, the CYQAA Council shall examine, through the audit procedure, whether the Accreditation criteria continue to be met according to article 17(3)(g) of the legislation.
6. In the case the audit procedure further substantiates the complaint and leads to major concerns that the accredited institution/department/programme no longer fulfils the criteria upon which accreditation was granted, the CYQAA Council may decide to:
 - revoke the Accreditation decision, or
 - initiate an external evaluation process of the institution/department/programme.

In the scenarios (5) and (6) the higher education institution is invited to make representation before a final decision is made. The final decision is then communicated to the institution and the complainant and it is published.

Please see Chapter 6.7.

8. SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT ANALYSIS	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>-CYQAA Council composed by academics with a variety in disciplinary backgrounds and experiences from different countries and educational systems.</p> <p>-A student representative, as well as a member of the professional bodies, participate in the CYQAA council as equal members.</p> <p>-CYQAA staffed with capable, competent, and well-trained personnel, equipped with well-rounded educational and managerial backgrounds.</p> <p>-Strong commitment, on behalf of the CYQAA, on continuous improvement and upgrading of quality assurance and accreditation.</p> <p>-Adherence to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA(ESG) for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as well as to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).</p>	<p>-Buildings not privately owned.</p> <p>-Personnel not on a permanent basis.</p> <p>-Delays in bringing about necessary changes on the legal framework.</p>

- Continuous updating of the database consisting of distinguished and experienced external evaluation experts.
- Earned international profile.
- Recognized by the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME-Certificate of Recognition).
- Registered in the European Quality Assurance Registry (EQAR).
- Member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).
- Full member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).
- Affiliate member of the European University Association (EUA).
- Member of the European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN).
- Very good working relationship with various institutions of higher learning and other stakeholders.
- Continuous and systematic communication with various stakeholders.
- Active seeking of feedback from institutions of higher learning.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cyprus' strategic geopolitical location as a regional and global hub for higher education. -High ranking of Cyprus Universities in world university rankings. -Programs of study being offered in English. -Availability of inter-university programs of study. -Recruitment of international students. -Utilization of existing research expertise and establishment of innovative and technologically advanced laboratory infrastructure. -Establishing strategic synergies with other QA stakeholders locally and globally. -Further strengthening of local and global synergies with other QA Agencies. -Revision and update of the existing legal framework. -Established good working relationships with all local and global stakeholders. -Opportunities to receive feedback for improvement, due to the Agency's good working relationships with HEI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delays for the legal framework for staff employment - Not on time adaptation of European challenges regarding programs institutions and alliances

-Further opportunity to network and exchange good practices with international organizations (ENQA, EQAR, WFME), due to the already established international profile of the Agency.

-Cyprus' manageable HE market (due to its size, the HE landscape is easier to monitor and warranty its QA).

-Cyprus a small-size country with an affordable cost of living.

9. KEY CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The development of quality assurance has been one of the major areas of higher education reform in Cyprus, since the establishment of CYQAA in 2015. It is recognized by all stakeholders and the society in general, as a crucial area of dynamic evolution.

CYQAA's membership in ENQA, its EQAR registration, and its recognition by WFME constituted important milestones for the Agency and for Cyprus' higher education sector in general. CYQAA's international recognition by the competent European and international bodies contributed significantly to the Agency's reliability and trust building.

CYQAA's core values are (a) Quality in Higher Education, (b) Establishing and Sustaining the Agency as an independent institution in Cyprus, and (c) its contribution to society. These values are underlined by the principles of transparency and accountability.

CYQAA's challenges and areas for future development focus on the following:

- The post-pandemic era
- Supporting education providers in quality management and in strengthening quality culture

The post-pandemic era:

CYQAA switched to remote work in March 2020 and so did all institutions of higher education in Cyprus. CYQAA closely monitored the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it had on higher education institutions and on higher education as a whole. Within the framework of its competencies CYQAA took action to support higher education institutions, students, and academic personnel. Exceptional times called for exceptional measures, and this is why site visits were conducted online. CYQAA suggested and provided

guidance in regard to alternative forms of teaching, including e-courses, in accordance with its set quality criteria as well as alternative forms of student evaluation. This period of crisis provided CYQAA and higher education institutions and their corresponding personnel with know-how, skills, and expertise and it remains a challenge how to incorporate alternative modes of work, teaching, and examinations in the post-pandemic era.

CYQAA, since its first ENQA evaluation continued its efforts to amend the Law governing its establishment and operation, based on the official European guidelines. The Agency prepared a Draft Law with the purpose of introducing provisions deemed necessary for its efficient operation.

Important amendments include the separation of the budget of the Agency from the Budget of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the creation of a new Budget by the Agency as a Legal Entity under Public Law.

Supporting education providers in quality management and in strengthening quality culture:

Higher Education Institutions in Cyprus provide for three educational cycles along with short cycles, a fact that may result to non-harmonized policies, legal framework, and results. Harmonization of the Cyprus higher educational institutions with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG) and development of competitive policies that support cross border collaboration and collaboration between institutions in Cyprus is one of the CYQAA's aim.

CYQAA is capable of performing its tasks provided for by the legislation, but it will remain a challenge to combine the handling of large numbers of institutions and applications with additional tasks and policy oriented activities. The challenge lies not only with regards to planning day-to-day activities, but also combining these activities with more complex content-rich activities, such as strategy and the design of innovative QA frameworks.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Definition	Abbreviation
Academic staff	The staff of a higher education institution which, of any rank, which is employed for teaching and / or research purposes in the higher education institution.	
Accumulation and transfer of credits system for vocational training	The learning system based on credit units to measure the workload of vocational education and training of students and the learning outcomes	ECVET
Agency	The Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, established and operating under the provisions of Part VI of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws, 2015 and 2016.	CYQAA
Blended learning	The teaching/learning approach which combines distance and conventional face-to-face communication in exploratory learning communities.	
Board/Council of the Agency of Quality Assurance	The Board/Council appointed in accordance with the provisions of section 28 and exercising the functions provided for in sections 27 and 32 of the Quality Assurance and	

and Accreditation in Higher Education or Board	Accreditation in Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws, 2015 and 2016 [L. 136 (I)/2015 - L. 132(I)/2021].	
Concentration of the program of study	Specialization as a result of a group of related courses, which, in the undergraduate program, vary by at least 30% and at postgraduate level by at least 40% of the total number of courses in the program and between two or more specializations. Differentiation should be at least 50% if a dissertation is included in the postgraduate program of study. The specialization, for an undergraduate program of study is stated on the transcript whereas for postgraduate program it is stated in both the transcript and the final academic qualification.	
Credit accumulation and transfer system	The learning system based on credit units for measuring the workload on students and the learning outcomes.	ECTS
Department	A university division which operates under a faculty which aims at promoting science, technology or the arts in the relevant scientific field, and which organizes teaching within the various programs of study ensuring continuous improvement of the learning process.	
Diploma supplement	The accompanying explanatory document of the higher education qualification granted in accordance with the	

	decisions for the creation of the European Higher Education Area.	
Double/multiple degrees	Separate degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme (if two degrees are awarded by two institutions, this is a “double degree”).	
Educational evaluation	The systematic, documented and detailed evaluation and recording of the educational work with the use of objective criteria and critical analysis and finding any existing weaknesses and deviations in connection with the character, objectives and mission of the institution, the faculties and programs of study.	
European Higher Education Area	The European area established in March 2010 by the European Ministers of Education and aims to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe.	EHEA
European Quality Assurance Register	The competent European body for the accreditation of quality assurance agencies which meet the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG) and their entry in the relevant list.	EQAR

Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA	Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA set by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).	ESG
External Evaluation Committee	A committee of experts appointed by the CYQAA Council according to the relevant legislation.	EEC
Faculty	An entity of related disciplines, which ensures the multidisciplinary approach, the communication with each other and the coordination needed for their teaching and research.	
High quality innovative research	Research with external funding attained from competitive programs, which results in findings with broad scientific, social, educational, economic impact, patents and publications with a large number of references in prestigious journals.	
Higher education	Education provided by universities or other educational institutions operating in the Republic or overseas as higher and tertiary education institutions.	HE
Higher education institution	A tertiary education institution or university.	HEI

Higher vocational education	Education provided by universities or other educational institutions operating in the Republic or overseas as higher and tertiary education institutions, aiming at the acquisition of vocational qualifications.	
Initial licence to operate	University license granted by the Council of Ministers after the relevant proposal of the Minister of Education and Culture, which is based on a recommendation made by CYQAA, for a period of four years and determines the date of commencement of operation of the university and its faculties.	
Interdepartmental program of study	The program of study which is organized and offered jointly by at least two (2) departments of the same university.	
Inter-university program of study	A program of study which is organized and offered jointly by at least two (2) universities from countries participating in the European Higher Education Area or from another country.	
Joint degree	<p>Separate degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme (if two degrees are awarded by two institutions, this is a “double degree”).</p> <p><u>EQAR</u> = The European approach relates only to joint</p>	

	programmes offered jointly by higher education institutions from two or more countries.	
Joint programs	<p>Are understood as an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions from <u>EHEA countries</u>, and leading to double/multiple degrees or a joint degree.</p> <p><u>EQAR</u> = The European approach relates only to joint programmes offered jointly by higher education institutions from two or more countries.</p>	
Learning outcomes	What the student knows, understands and is able to implement after the completion of the learning process. They are defined and they are distinguished on the basis of the knowledge and skills the student is expected to acquire.	
Licence to operate	University license granted by the Council of Ministers after the completion of the first five years of its operation following a proposal by the Minister of Education and Culture based on a recommendation made by CYQAA after and a university report which records the progress made, both in terms of achieving its objectives and mission, as well as in regard to its compliance with the Law and the university Charter.	

Practical training	<p>The part of the studies during which the student is placed in production or service facilities with the purpose of:</p> <p>(i) being informed in regard to their structure, functions, and the social, economic and technological factors affecting working conditions,</p> <p>(ii) his/her active participation in the processes and methods of production or of the provision of services and their correlation with the theoretical and laboratory knowledge acquired during the studies with the problems arising in the workplace,</p> <p>(iii) his/her contact with production sites and applied research to create a two-way relationship between the two.</p>	
Private higher education institution	An institution registered in the Republic and offering education, for which a natural or legal person of private Law is responsible for matters of administration, operation and maintenance.	
Private institution	Private institution of higher education established by private initiative and funds.	
Private university	A university for which a legal person of private Law, registered in the Republic in accordance with the provisions of the Private Universities (Establishment, Operation and Control)	

	Laws, 2005 to 2011, is responsible for matters of administration, operation and maintenance.	
Professor Emeritus or Emeritus	The honorary title that may be awarded to a university professor who retires in the higher academic grade.	
Programs of study	The educational programs and the fields of study offered by institutions of higher education through regular schooling or through distance learning or other methods of cross-border provision of education.	
Public institution	The institution, the responsibility for the establishment, operation and maintenance of which belongs to the Republic.	
Public university	The university, the responsibility for the establishment, operation and maintenance of which belongs to the Republic.	
Quality accreditation	The statutory recognition of an institution or a department or program of study on the basis of specific, predetermined by the Agency and published in advance criteria and indicators.	
Quality assurance	The systematic confirmation of the continuous assurance and improvement of the quality level of an educational institution on the basis of the criteria prescribed by the Agency.	QA

Recognized higher education institution	A higher education institution operating in the Republic or overseas and recognized as such by the competent authorities of the Republic or the competent authorities of the country in which it operates.	
Research institution of postgraduate studies	A university-level research institution that provides high-quality, ground-breaking research and relevant postgraduate education (masters and doctoral level).	
University	A higher education institution, which is recognised as such by the competent authorities of the Republic or by the competent authority of the country where it operates.	

ANNEXES

ANNEX I

Analysis of feedback received from stakeholders October 2022 – Questionnaire: Higher Education Institutions’ Feedback on the Implementation of Part 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA – ESG (2015)

ANNEX II

Analysis of feedback received from HEIs – Questionnaire: Higher Education Institution’s Feedback on CYQAA External Evaluation Process

ANNEX III

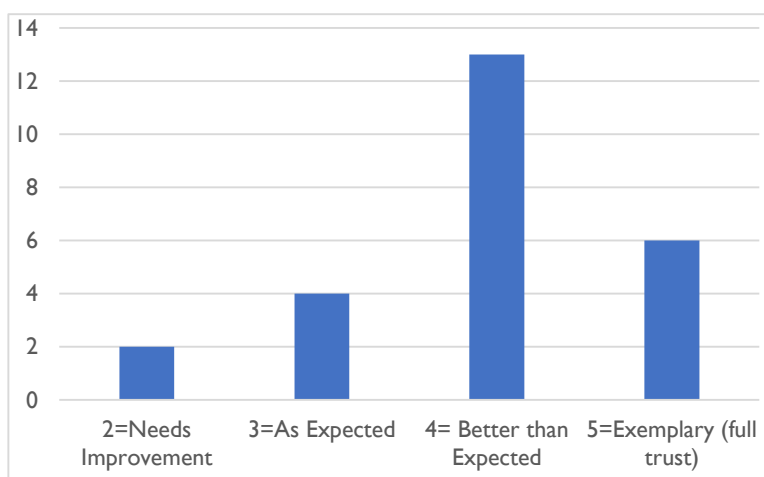
Analysis of feedback received from Experts – Questionnaire: Experts feedback on the process of the evaluation/accreditation of internal quality assurance systems

*Notes: Other documents that are crucial for this SAR are provided in footnotes (with links) throughout the self-assessment report.

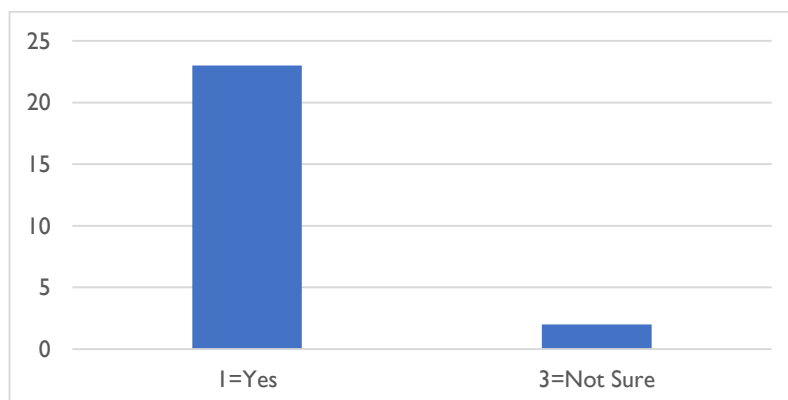
ANNEX I

Analysis of feedback received from stakeholders October 2022 – Questionnaire: Higher Education Institutions' Feedback on the Implementation of Part 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (2015)

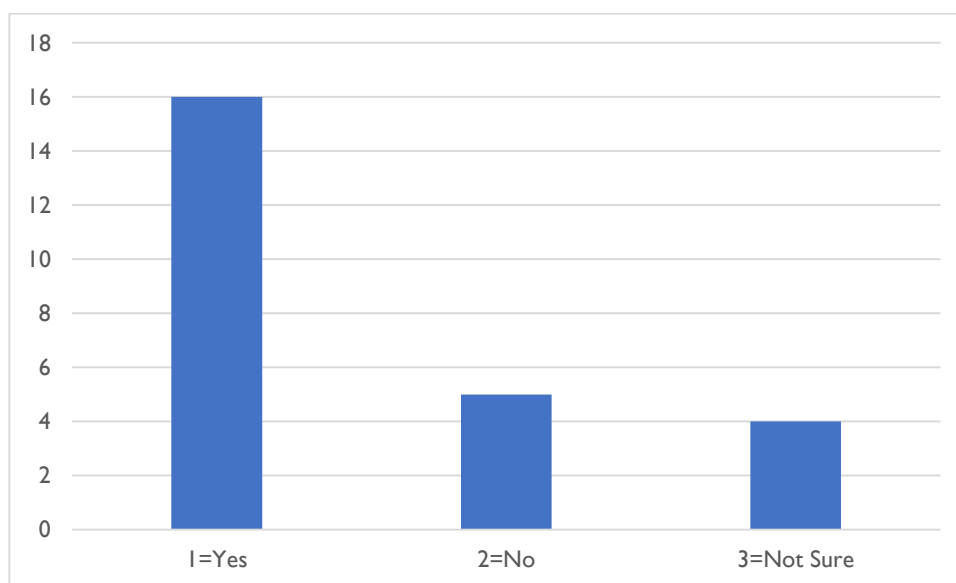
3.1.1 Please indicate the level of trust you put in CYQAA's external quality assurance procedures in general.



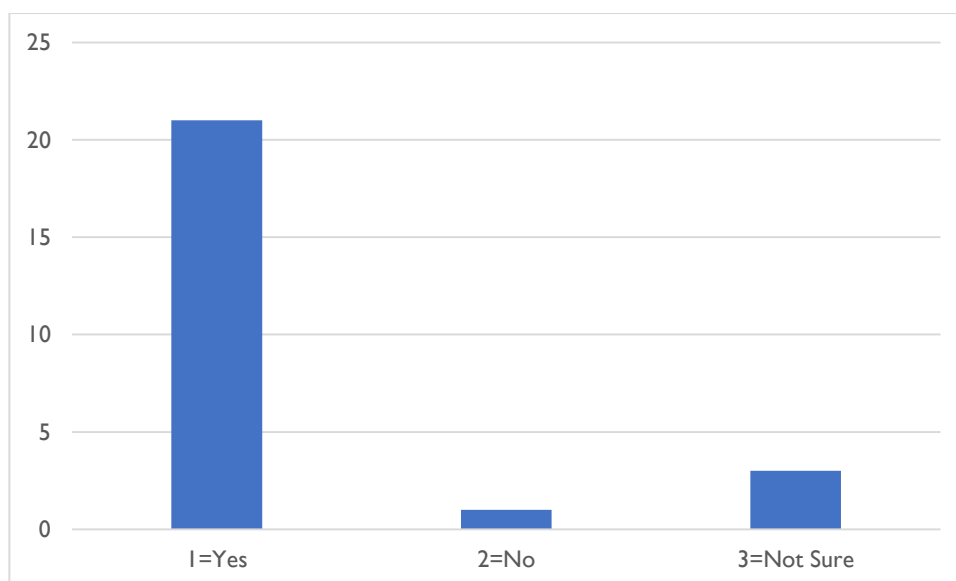
3.1.2 The goals and objectives of the quality assurance activities are described and published?



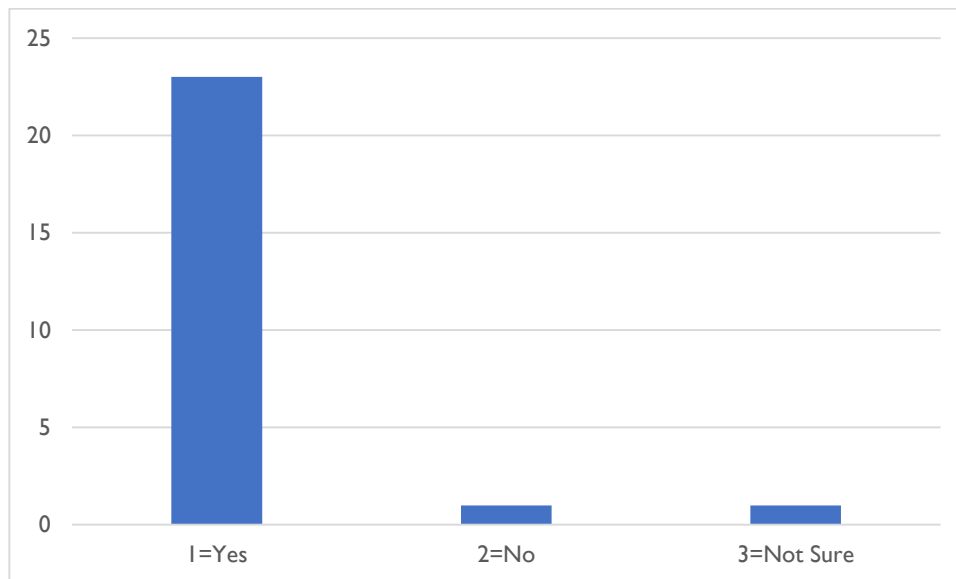
3.1.3 Relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, are involved in the scope of the agency's work?



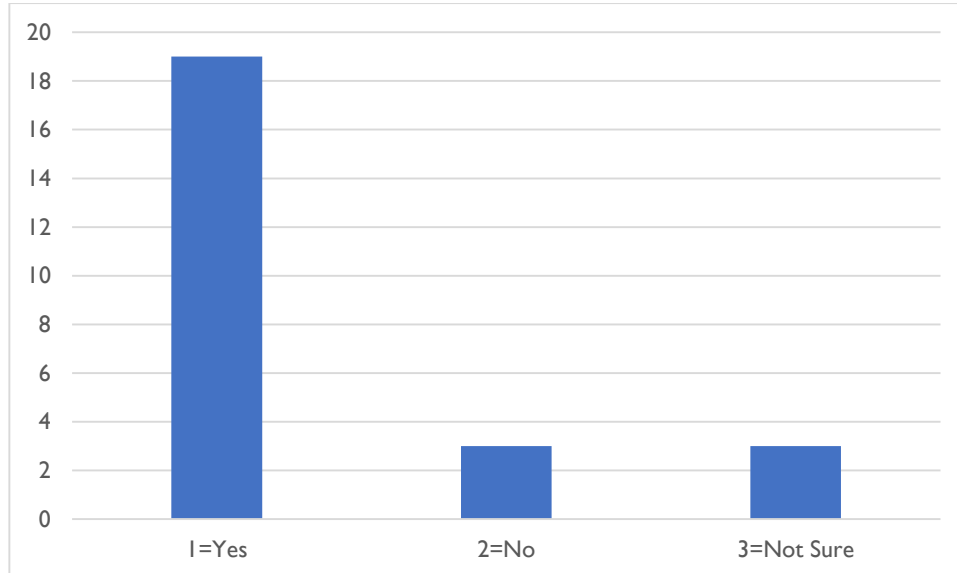
3.1.4 Are you satisfied with the level of involvement of international members in agency committees?



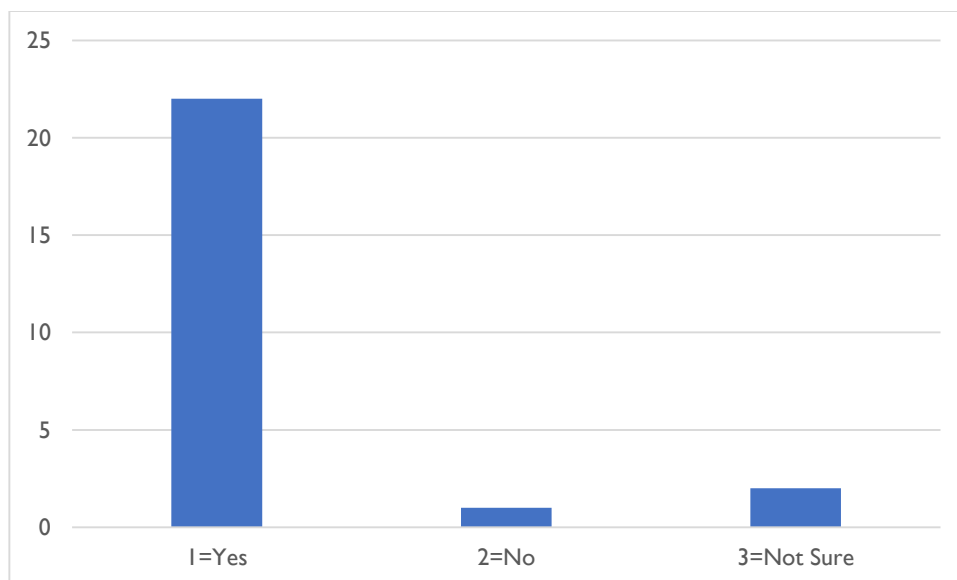
3.2.1 Are the outcomes of the external evaluation process accepted within the higher education system, by the state, the stakeholders and the public?



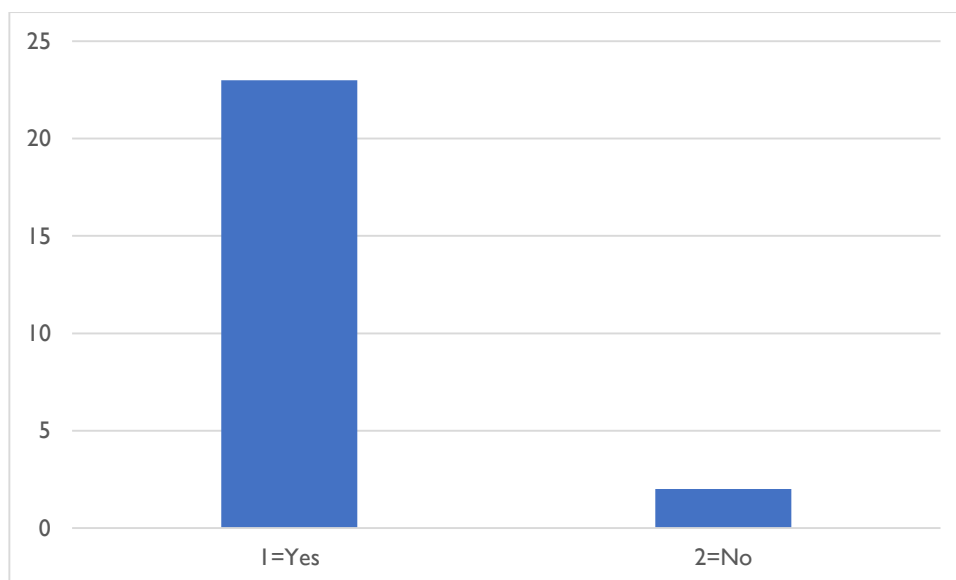
3.3.1 CYQAA has Organisational independence, demonstrated by official documentation (e.g. instruments of government, legislative acts or statutes of the organisation) that stipulates the independence of the agency's work from third parties, such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholder organisations.



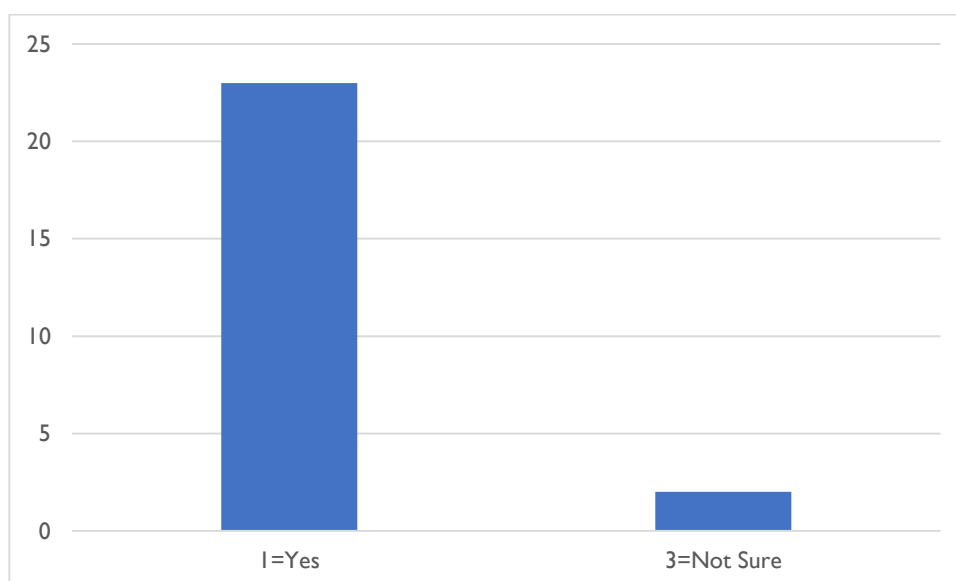
3.3.2 CYQAA has Operational independence in regard to the operation of the agency's procedures and methods as well as the nomination and appointment of external experts are undertake independently from third parties such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders.(*)



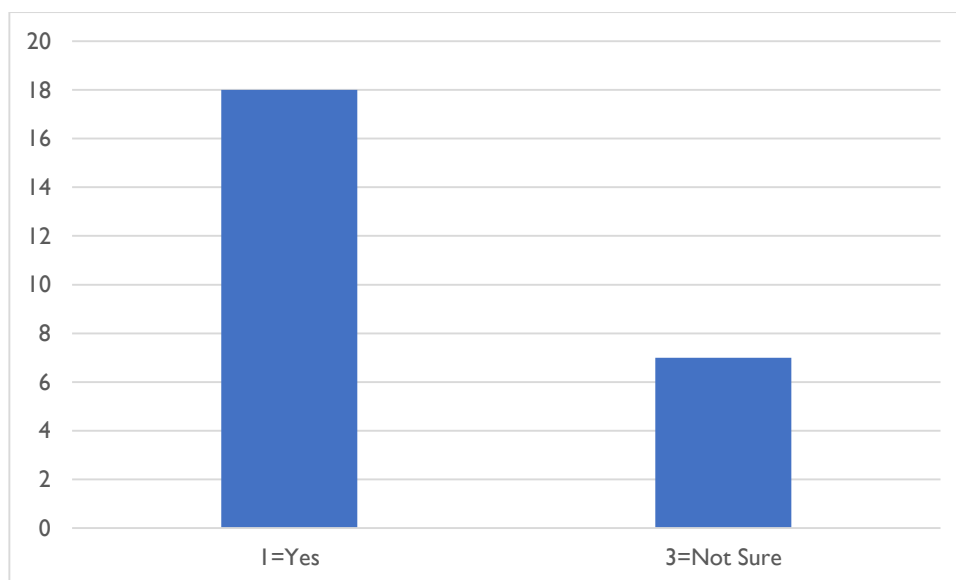
3.3.3 CYQAA is independent in regard to its formal outcomes and the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.



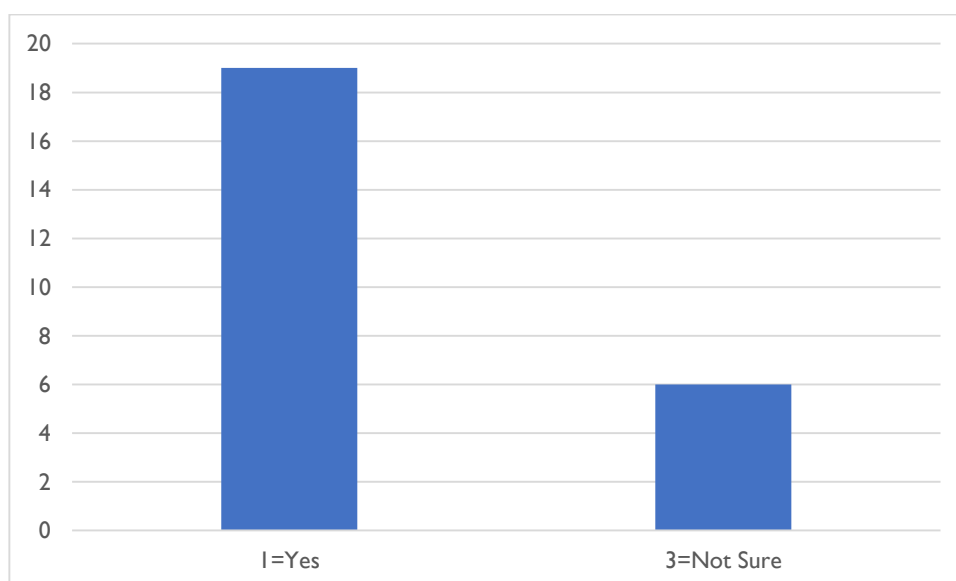
3.4.1 Findings of the Agency published in the Thematic Analyses have contributed to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in our institution.



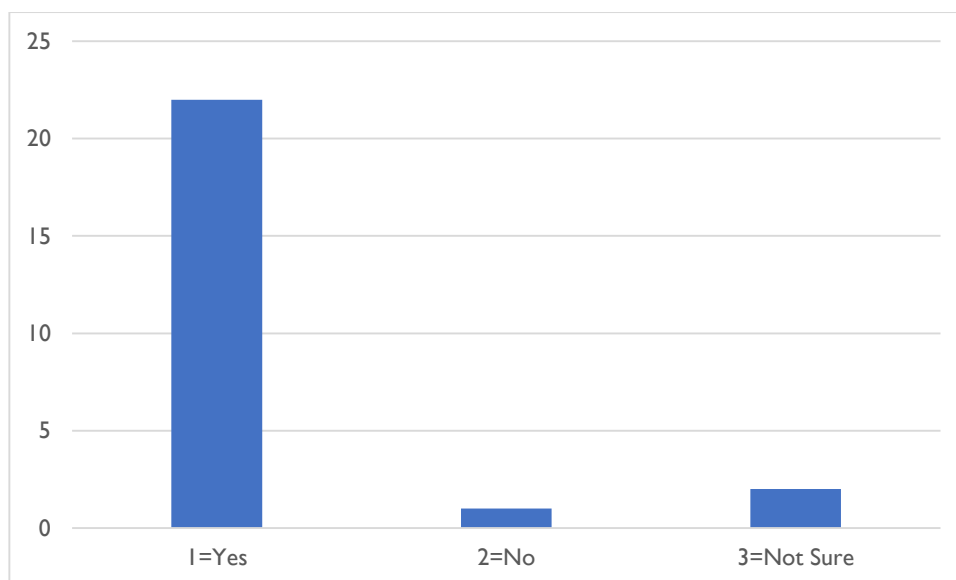
3.5.1 CYQAA resources enable the Agency to organise and run its external quality assurance activities in an effective and efficient manner.



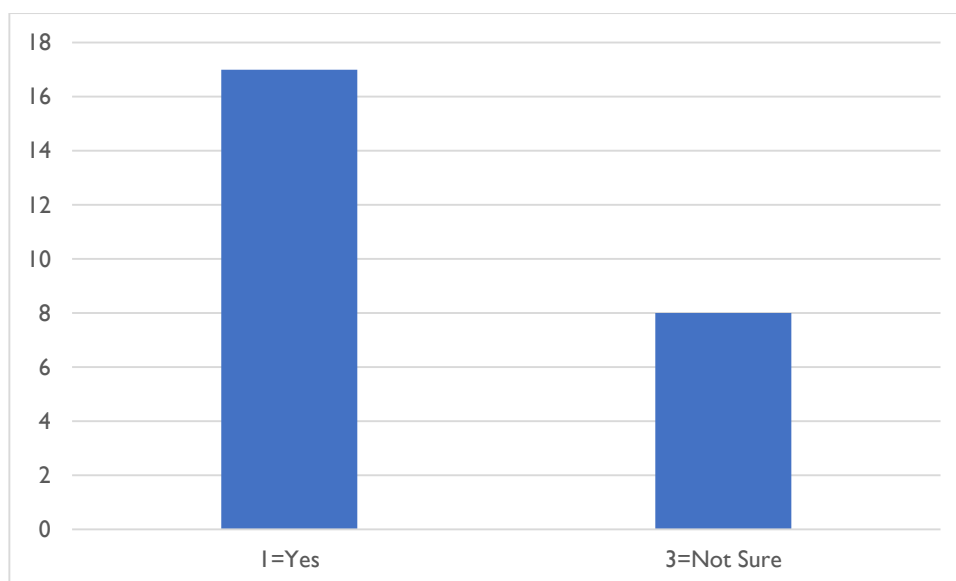
3.5.2 Resources enable the Agency to improve, to reflect on their practice and to inform the public about their activities.



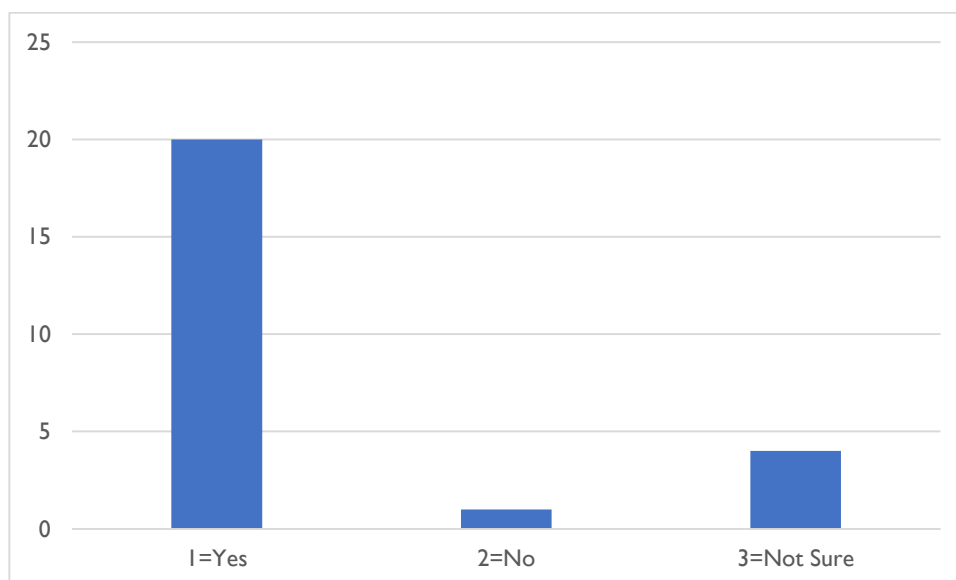
3.6.1 The Agency, ensures that all persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically;



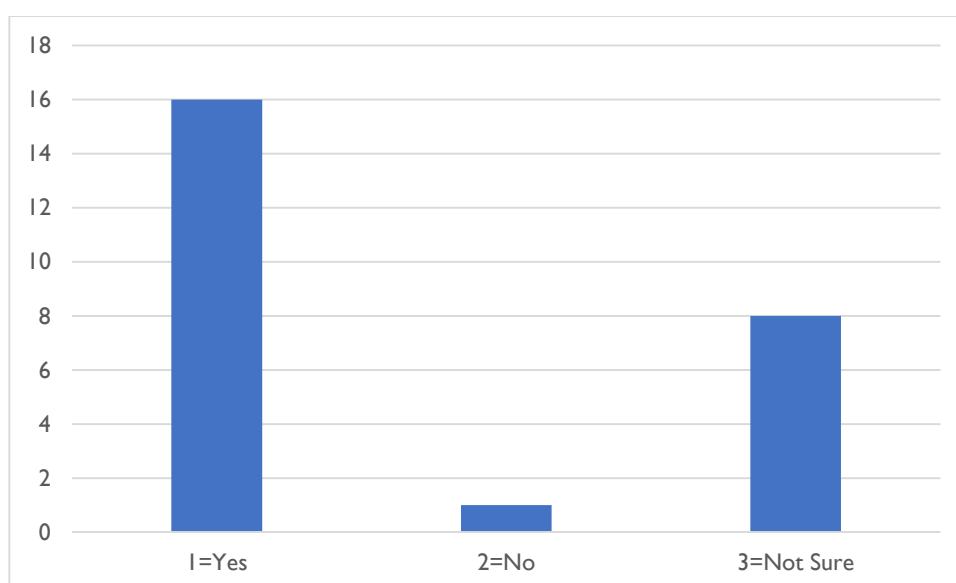
3.6.2 The Agency, includes internal and external feedback mechanisms that lead to a continuous improvement within the agency;



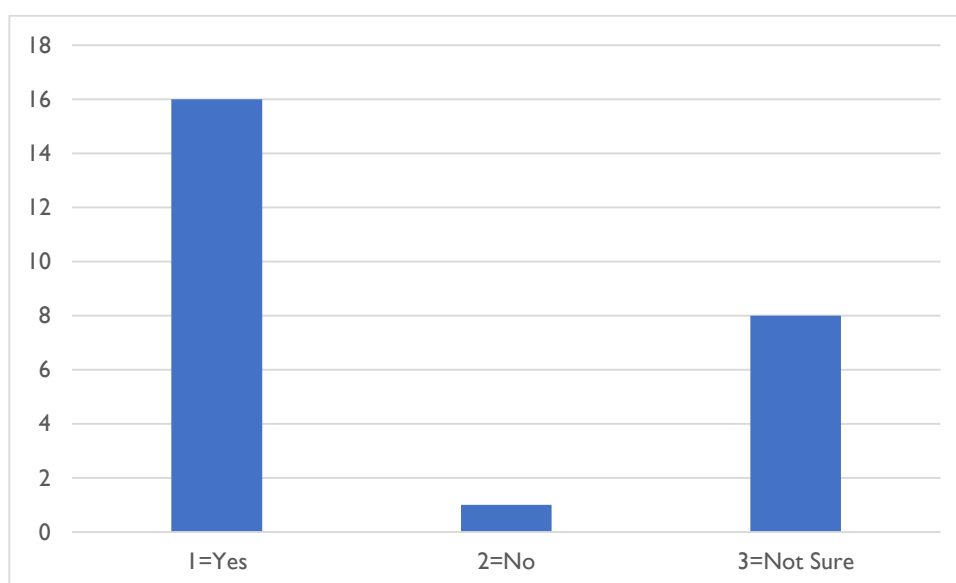
3.6.3 The Agency, guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination;



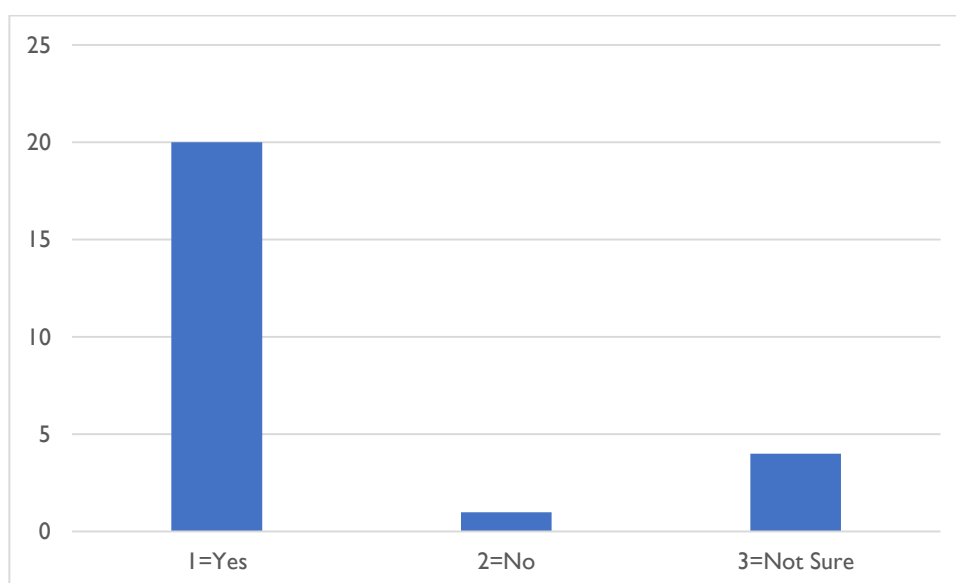
3.6.4 The Agency, outlines the appropriate communication with the relevant authorities of those jurisdictions where they operate;



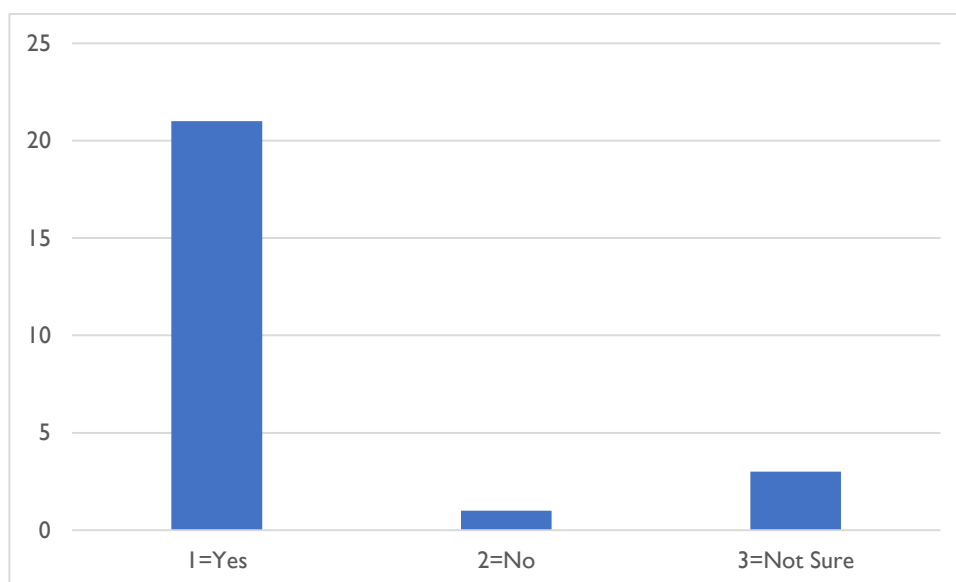
3.6.5 The Agency, ensures that any activities carried out and material produced by subcontractors are in line with the ESG, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance activities are subcontracted to other parties;



3.6.6 The Agency, allows the agency to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality assurance.



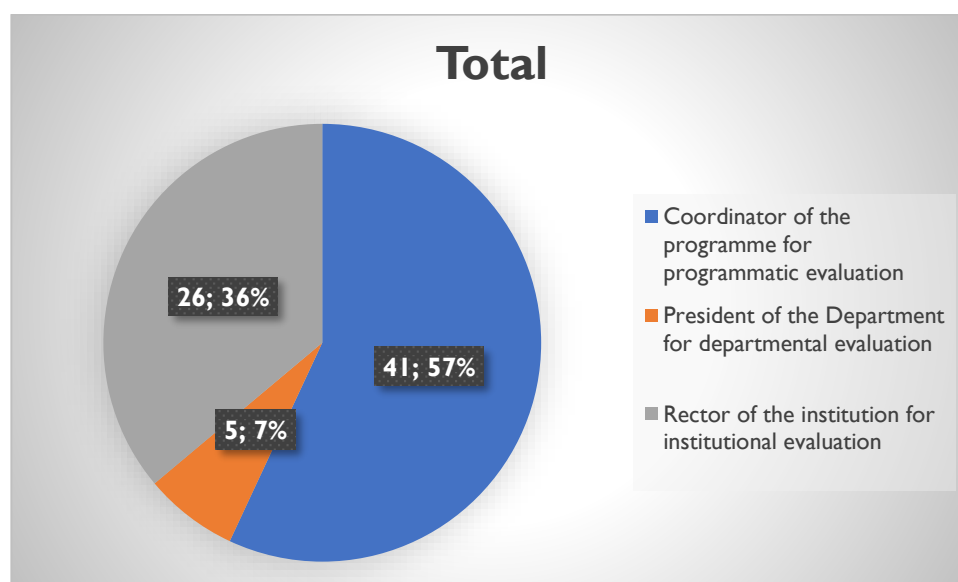
3.7.1 Does the Agency's periodic external review assure you that it continues to adhere to the principles enshrined in the ESG.



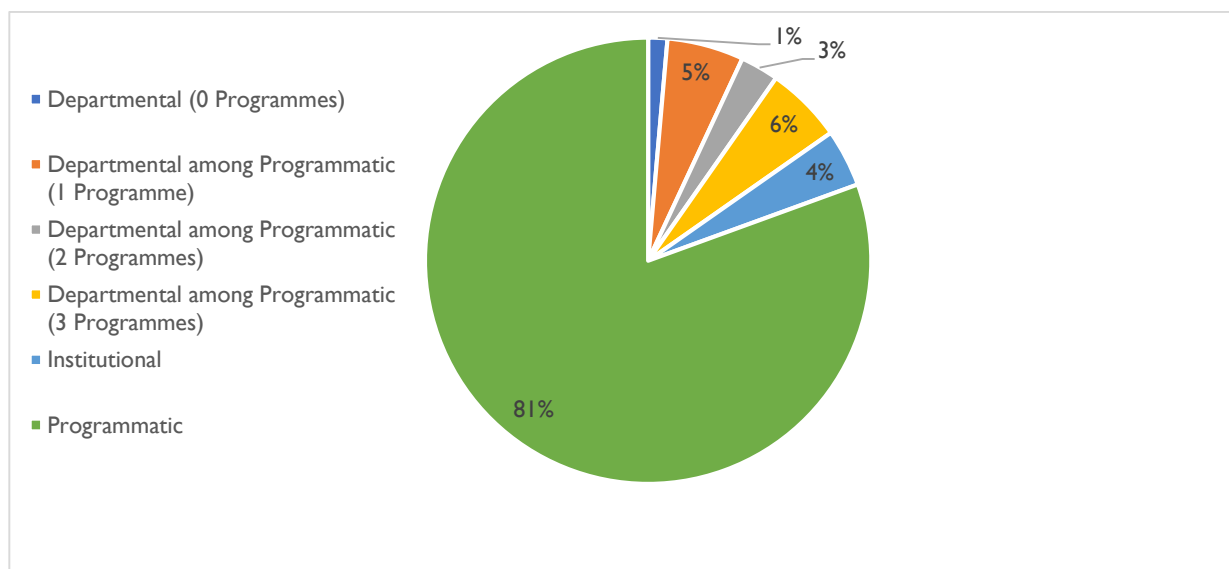
ANNEX II

Analysis of feedback received from HEIs – Questionnaire: Higher Education Institution's Feedback on CYQAA External Evaluation Process

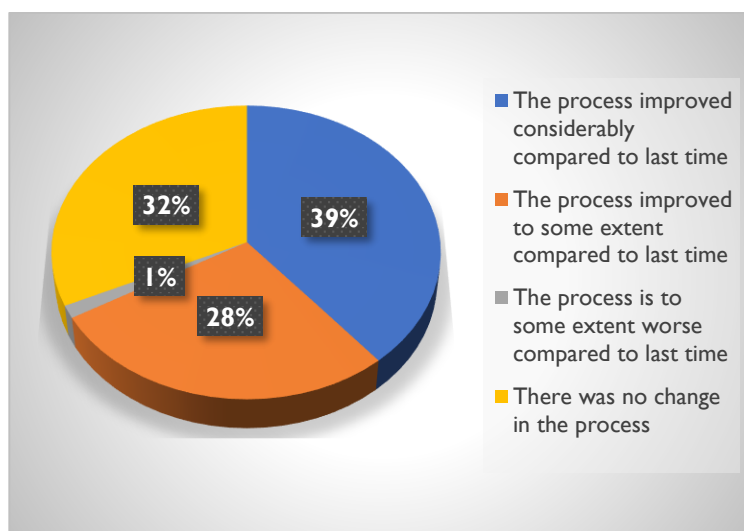
Position of the Respondent within the HEI



1. Type of the external evaluation



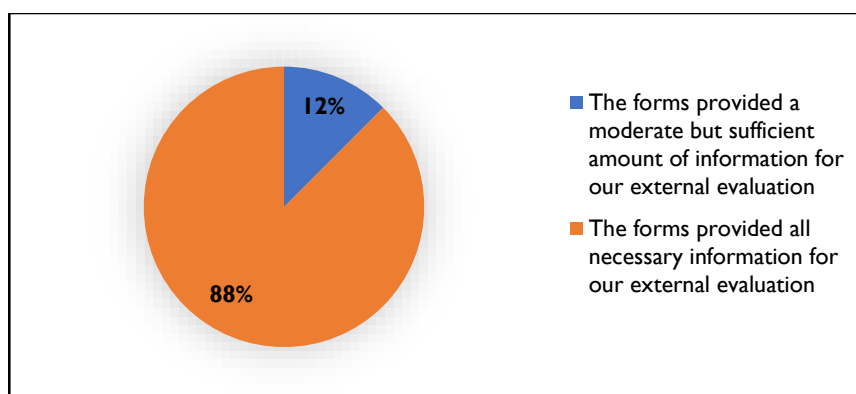
2. Please assess the external evaluation process comparing it to the previous time an external evaluation conducted at your institution by CYQAA



3. Please comment (if any) on the negative aspects of this application process

All EEC members had MIS background; Major impact for the evaluation process.	1
Even though according to the site visit program schedule there was a dedicated slot for 45-minute presentation by the program coordinator, unfortunately the EEC never provided this opportunity.	1
everything ran smoothly	1
N/A	3
NA	2
NIL	1
None. An exceptionally well efficient process.	1
Overall we are very satisfied with the whole process. Given that the application was submitted in 2019, the only negative aspect is that the process took a bit long to be processed.	1
The application process was very smooth. There were no negative aspects of the process.	7
The application process was very smooth. There were no negative aspects of the process	3
The application process was very smooth. There were no negative aspects of the process.	4
The procedure was smoothly and effectively conducted.	1
The visit of the EEC felt a little rushed since there was a lot of information to share during the one day agenda. The strengths, and also weaknesses, of the programme could have been better highlighted if there was more time with the EEC.	1
Too much time between application and evaluation	1

**4. Do the forms, including CYQAA standards and guidelines
(<http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/evaluation-en/forms-en>) provide you with all necessary
information to enable you to fill your application?**



**5. What kind of information was missing from the Forms that would have helped you with your external
evaluation?**

No answer provided	40
forms are complete	1
I think the forms are comprehensive enough	1
More details on their expertise in academic programs	1
N/A	7
NIL	1

None	1
Nonthing	1
Not applicable	1
Nothing	1
On the available forms there should be a clear differentiation between requirements for universities and colleges (e.g. departments, schools etc.)	1
The forms are constantly revised and updated by CYQAA thus updating information from sources presented in item 6 below.	1
The forms are quite detailed and assisted us to complete the Application.	1
The forms were complete and the sections were comprehensive. However, we recommend that student feedback is included as section and reflected on in the application (overall, by year, per faculty/school) as it was a key input for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) during the interviews.	14
Grand Total	72

6. Which other sources of information did you consult to prepare your application to CYQAA?

CYQAA Forms	5
CYQAA Forms CYQAA Announcements	2

CYQAA Forms CYQAA Officers	4
CYQAA Forms CYQAA Thematic Analysis	1
CYQAA Officers	2
ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms	1
ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Announcements	2
ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Announcements Other	1
ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Officers CYQAA Announcements	4
ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Thematic Analysis	1
Legislation CYQAA Forms	3
Legislation CYQAA Forms CYQAA Officers CYQAA Announcements	1

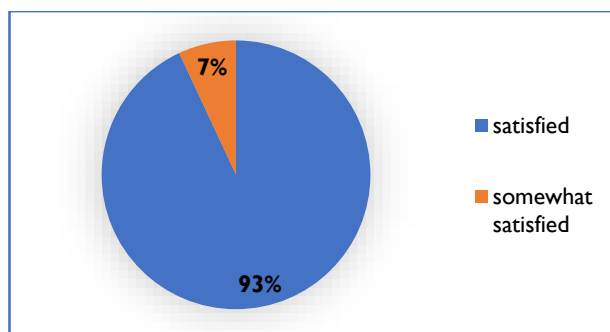
Legislation CYQAA Forms CYQAA Thematic Analysis CYQAA Announcements	2
Legislation ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Announcements	2
Legislation ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Officers CYQAA Announcements	5
Legislation ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Thematic Analysis	1
Legislation ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Thematic Analysis CYQAA Announcements	2
Legislation ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Thematic Analysis CYQAA Announcements Other	2
Legislation ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Thematic Analysis	15

CYQAA Officers CYQAA Announcements	
Legislation ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms CYQAA Thematic Analysis CYQAA Officers CYQAA Announcements Other	13
Legislation ESG 2015 CYQAA Forms Other	1
Legislation ESG 2015 CYQAA Thematic Analysis CYQAA Officers CYQAA Announcements Other	1
Other	1
Grand Total	72

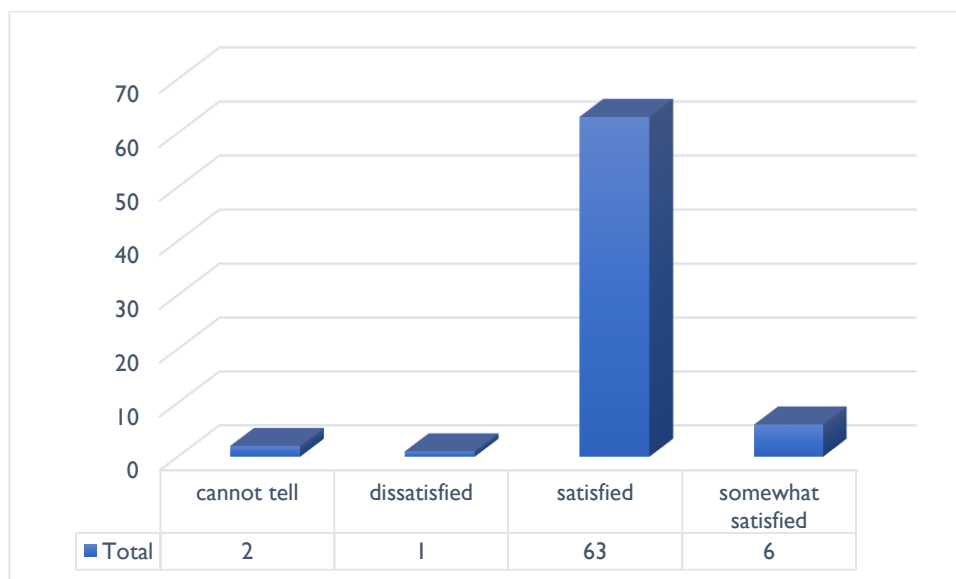
Other sources of information that we consulted to prepare the application to CYQAA

All information is satisfied	1
CEDEFOP(2020) skills forecast EN, Cyprus, Χαρτογράφηση τριτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Κύπρου 2021-2022, “World Economic Form 16 Skill toolset, Main Economic indicators for Cyprus 2017-2024	1
EQF standarts	1
Internal Offices	1
International Accreditation Sources, e.g. EFMD	1
N/A	3
None	1
SDG'S	1
The University of Nicosia Internal Quality Assurance Committee	1
The University US Legal Office	14
The University's Internal Quality Assurance internal regulations	1
Grand Total	72

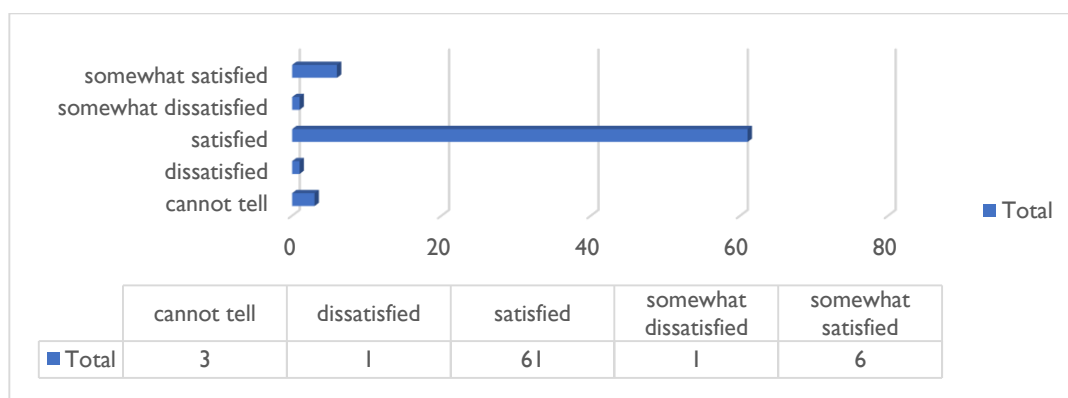
7.1. Clarity of the whole application process



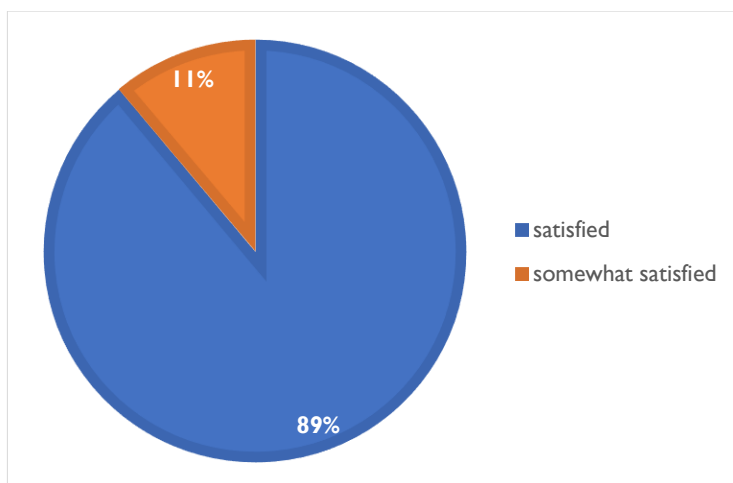
7.2. Transparency of external evaluation criteria and their interpretation



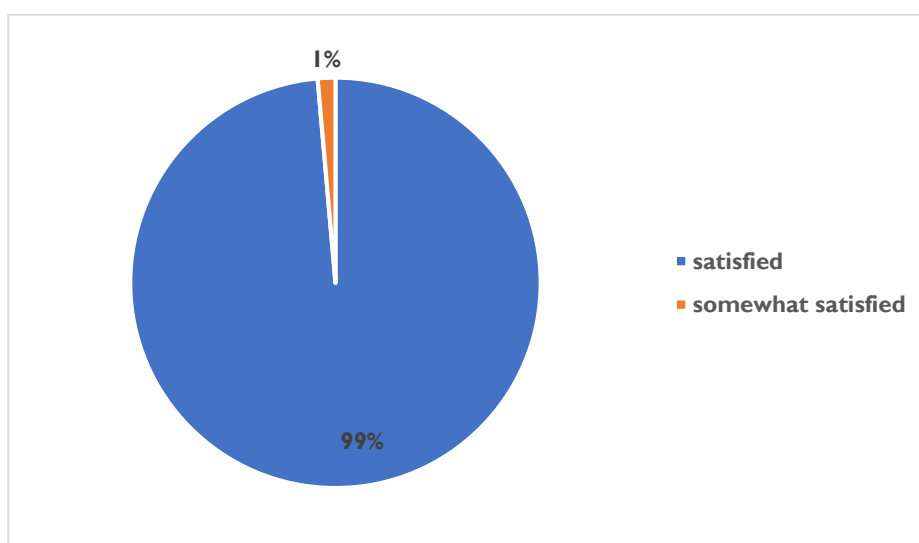
7.3. Proportionate, consistent and fair decision-making



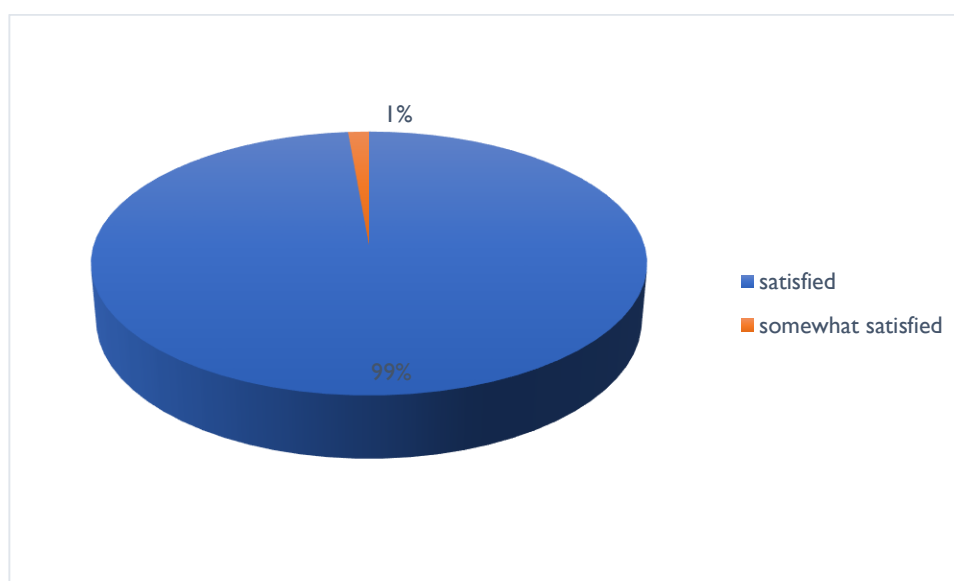
7.4. Information on the CYQAA website



7.5. Communication with the Agency before the site-visit



7.6. Overall coordination of the external evaluation on behalf of CYQAA

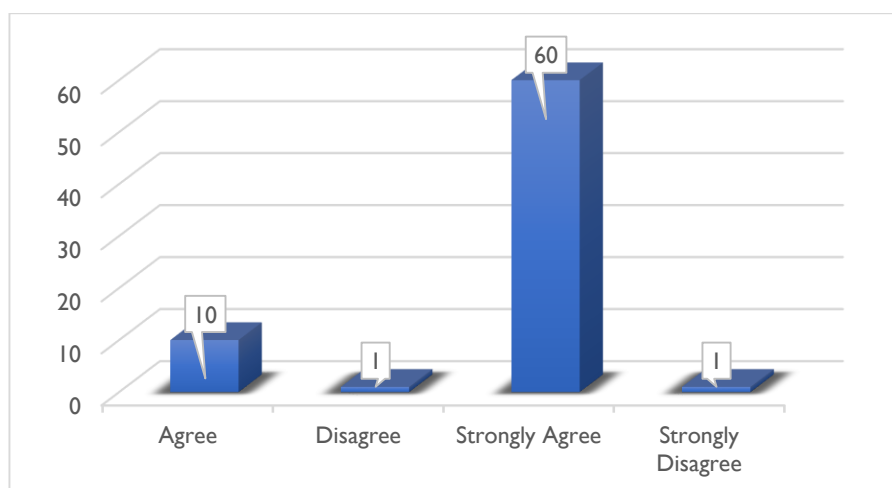


8. Please comment on the aspects you feel (somewhat) dissatisfied.

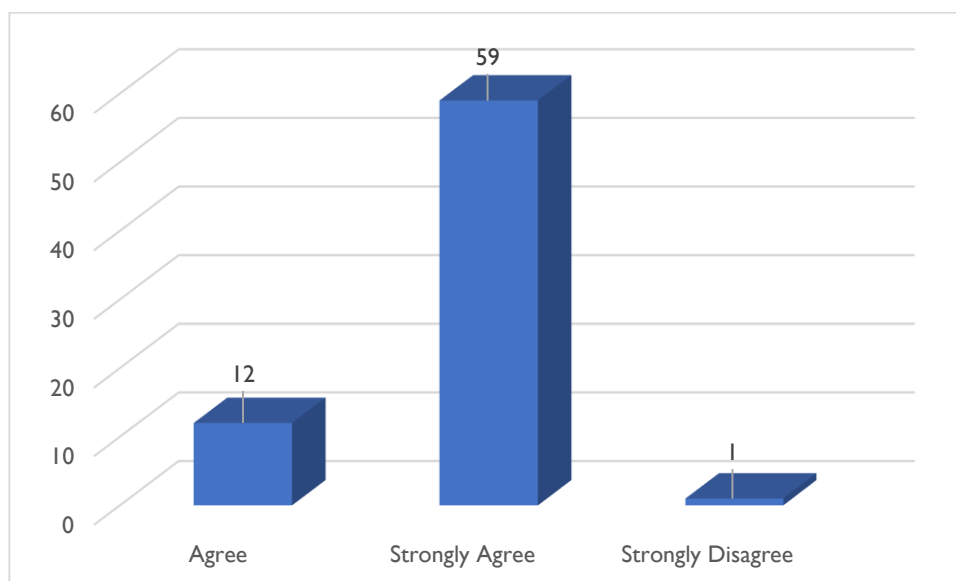
No answer provided	45
72 and 73 the evaluation is not received yet and as such these points cannot be assessed	1
A lot of the questions were not related to the subject. The programme under reaccreditation was a 2-year programme NOT a Bachelor one. They proposed a much more difficult programme for 2-year ICT vocational programme. Also EEC concentrated on questions and comments on gender equality and discrimination.	1
Due to long time between application and evaluation some of the date provided to the EEC was outdated and there was no sufficient time to re-collect and re-submit in necessary detail. This is reflected in the EECs decisions and comments.	1
forms are too bureaucratic.	1
N/A	5
None	1
Our understanding was that the evaluation procedure would involve a constructive discussion between the program coordinator and the EEC members, following the presentation of the program's structure/content by the coordinator. Unfortunately, this was not possible.	1
Overall we are very satisfied. The members of the evaluation committee were very experienced and high profile researchers/professionals, which ensured in depth understanding of the work we have conducted in the taught programmes of the Department.	1

The External Evaluation Committee team were experts in their field and we are thankful for their time and effort in this thoughtful review process. In addition, we are very appreciative of the organization, professionalism and the leadership of the CYQAA representatives. We thank them for their efforts.	13
The External Evaluation Committee were experts in their field and we are thankful for their time and effort in this thoughtful review process. In addition, we are very appreciative of the organization, professionalism and the leadership of the CYQAA representatives. We thank them for their efforts.	1
We suggest for specific guidance to be given to the EEC members to emphasize less on their respective disciplines.	1
Grand Total	72

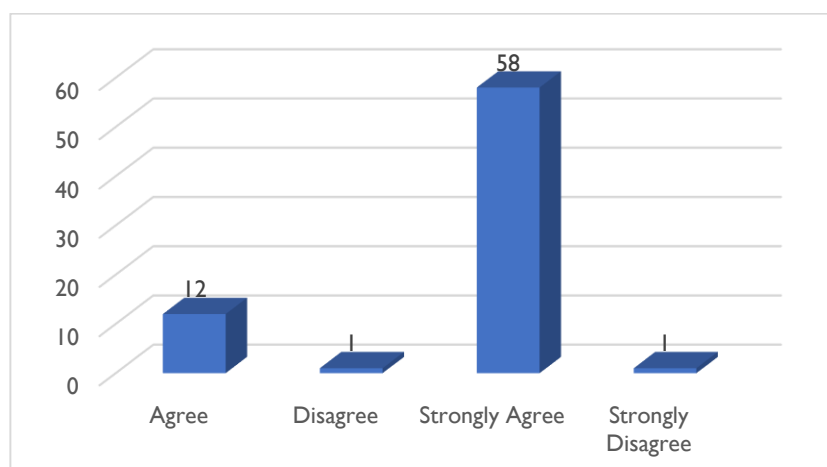
9.1 Prior to the visit of the EEC you had a good understanding of the purpose of the site visit



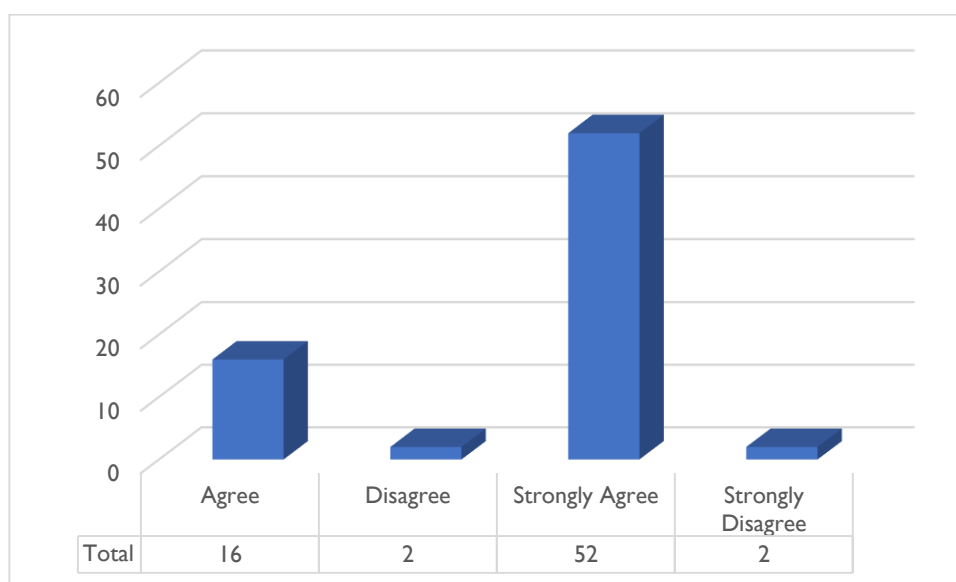
9.2 Prior to the visit of the EEC you had a good understanding of the schedule of the site visit



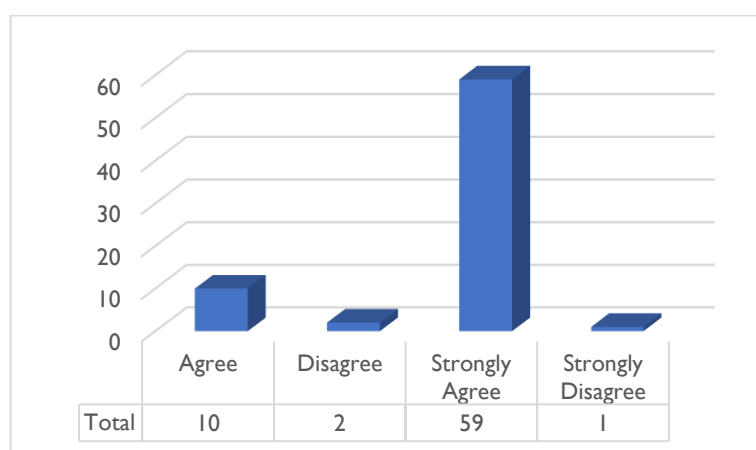
9.3 Prior to the visit of the EEC you had a good understanding of the duration of the site visit



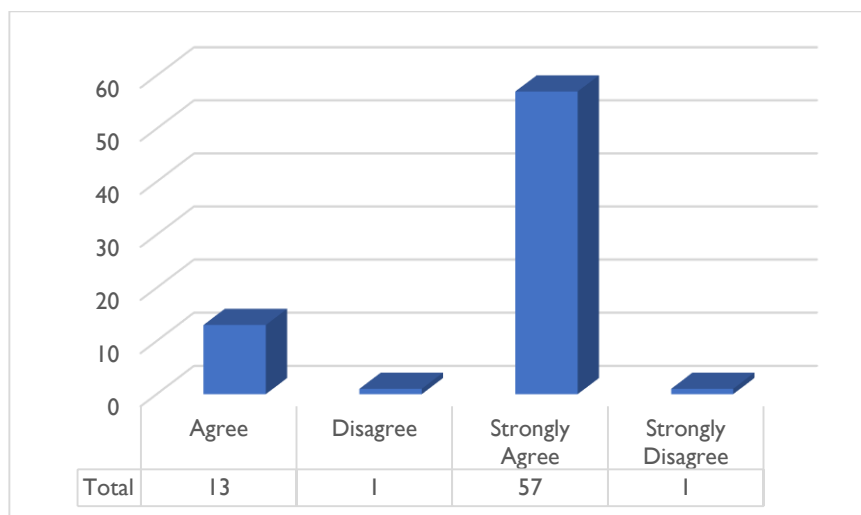
9.4 Prior to the visit of the EEC you had a good understanding of the documents required by the EEC during the site visit



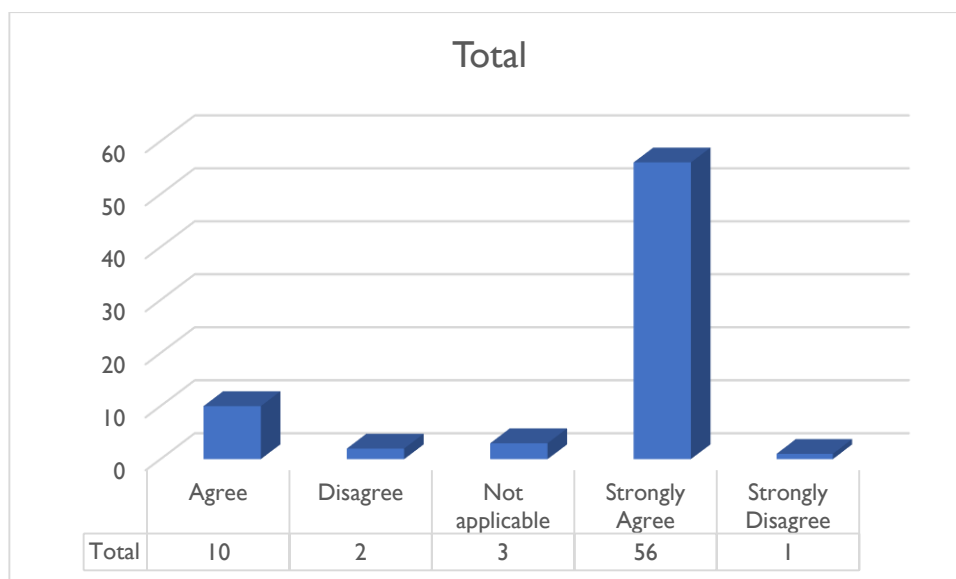
10.1 The EEC clearly demonstrated communication skills



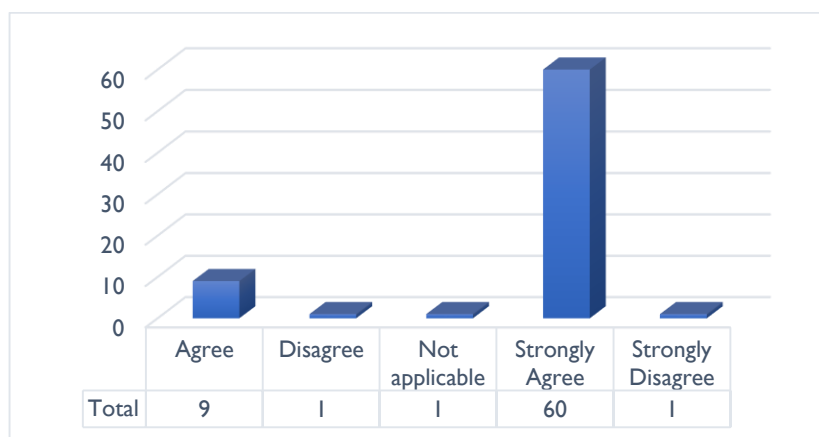
10.2. The EEC clearly demonstrated organizational skills



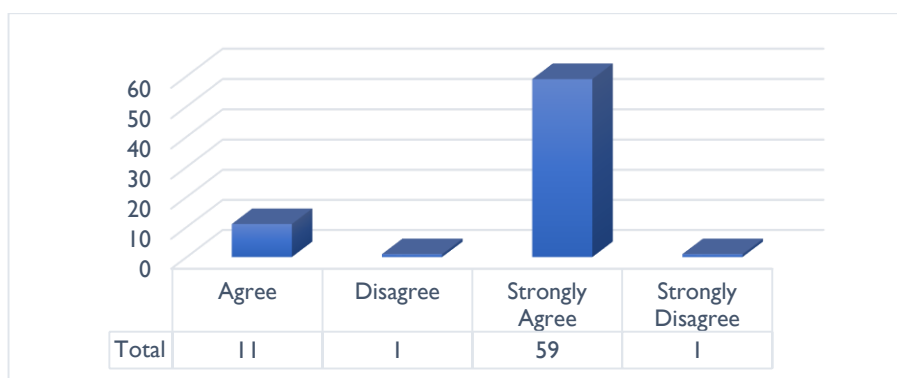
10.3. The EEC clearly demonstrated report writing skills



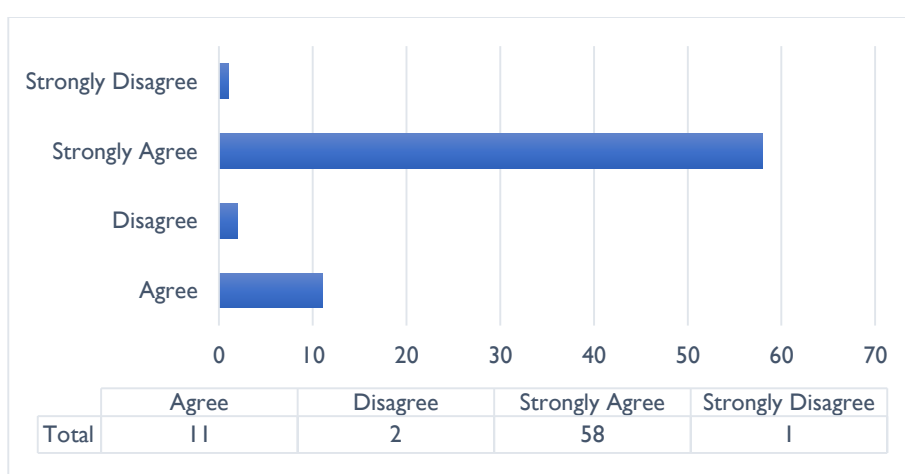
10.4 The EEC clearly demonstrated good knowledge of international quality assurance in higher education and of the ESG



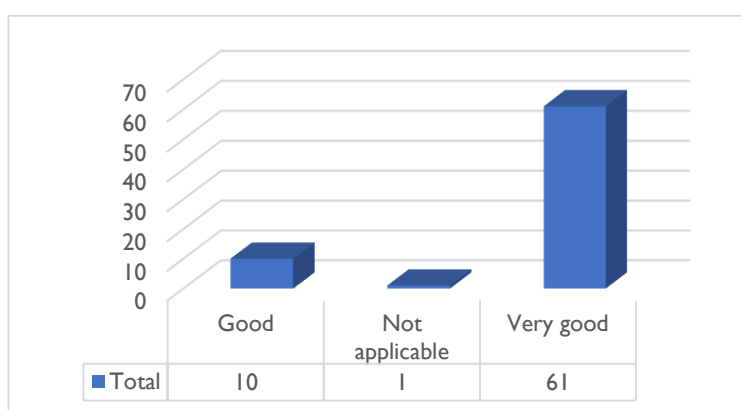
10.5. The EEC clearly demonstrated the expectations of the EEC



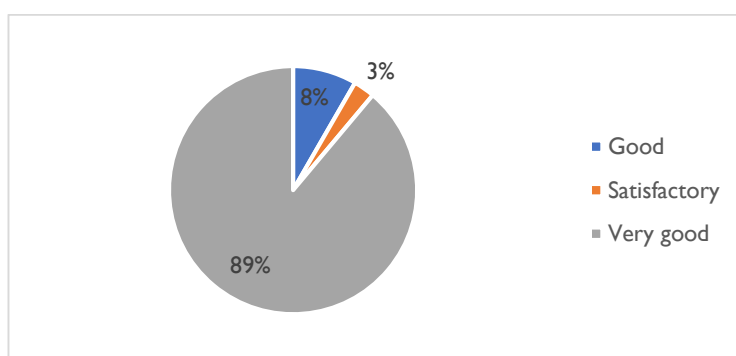
10.6. The EEC clearly demonstrated a good approach



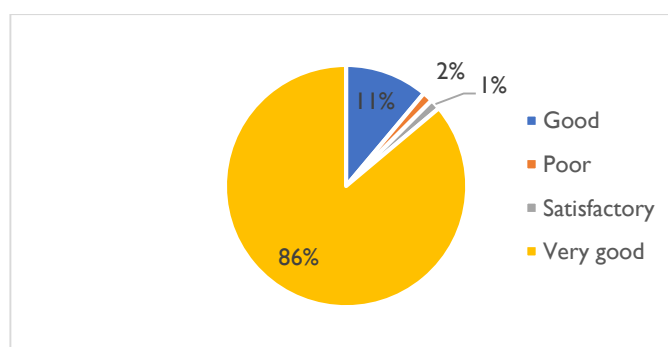
11.1 The expectations from the EEC in terms of number



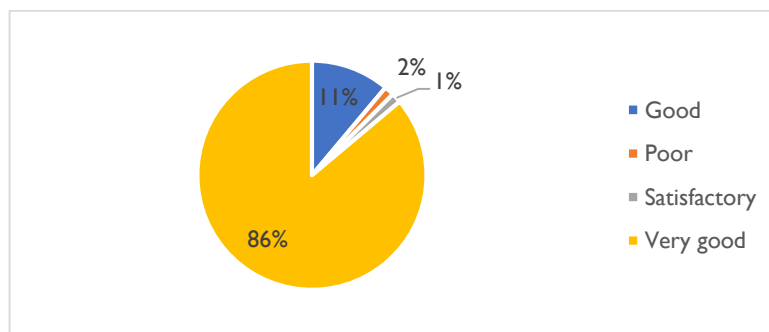
11.2. The expectations from the EEC in terms of expertise



11.3 The expectations of the EEC in terms of Professionalism / Interpersonal Communication Skills



11.4 The expectations of the EEC in terms of preparation



Feedback was received for the following evaluations:

Type of Evaluation	Information
Programmatic	Programme: "Law" (1.5 academic years, 90 ECTS, Master, LLM, E Learning) with concentrations: European Business Law, Human Rights and Social Justice School of Law, Department of Law
Programmatic	Μηχανικοί Οχημάτων (2 Έτη, 120 ECTS, Δίπλωμα)
Programmatic	Αισθητική (4 Έτη/240 ECTS / Πτυχίο)

Programmatic	MA International Relations and Eastern Mediterranean Studies DL
Programmatic	Electrical engineering department, master in biomedical engineering
Programmatic	Make-up and Nail Artist (1 Year/60 ECTS, Certificate)
Programmatic	Αισθητική- (4 Έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)
Programmatic	Αισθητική- (4 Έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)
Programmatic	Department of Chemical Engineering, Undergraduate Programme in Chemical Engineering, PhD Programme in Chemical Engineering and Environmental Technology
Departmental among Programmatic (3 Programmes)	Hairdressing (3 year Higher Diploma) 180 ECTS Aesthetics (4 year Bachelor Degree) 240 ECTS Professional Make Up (2 year Diploma) 120 ECTS
Departmental among Programmatic (3 Programmes)	Department of Mechanical Engineering Mechanical Engineering (3 academic years, 180 ECTS, Doctorate (PhD)) Energy Engineering (3 academic semesters, 90 ECTS, Master (MSc)) Mechanical Engineering (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BSc))
Programmatic	Department of Mechanical Engineering - Automotive Engineering (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BSc))
Programmatic	“Law” (1.5 academic years, 90 ECTS, Master, LLM, E- Learning) with concentrations:
Programmatic	Master of Landscape Architecture
Programmatic	BA Travel & Tourism Management (4 Years, Bachelor, 240 ECTS)
Programmatic	BA Travel & Tourism Management (4 Years, Bachelor, 240 ECTS)
Programmatic	BA Travel & Tourism Management (4 years, Bachelor / 240 ECTS)

Programmatic	Engineering Management (1.5 years, 90 ECTS, Master)
Programmatic	Industrial Engineering (4 Years, 244 ECTS, BSc)
Departmental among Programmatic (2 Programmes)	Department of Industrial Engineering & Engineering Management
Programmatic	Business Analytics (3 semesters, 90 ECTS, MSBA)
Programmatic	Business Analytics (3 semesters, 90 ECTS, MSBA)
Programmatic	Business Administration (4 Years, 240 ECTS, BBA)
Departmental among Programmatic (2 Programmes)	Department of Business Administration & Analytics
Programmatic	Public Health (1.5 years / 90 ECTS, Master of Public Health)
Departmental among Programmatic (1 Programme)	Culinary Arts Diploma
Programmatic	BSc MIS
Programmatic	Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BA))
Departmental among Programmatic (1 Programme)	Department of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics
Programmatic	Computer Science (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BS))

Departmental among Programmatic (1 Programme)	Department of Computer Science
Programmatic	Psychology (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BS))
Departmental among Programmatic (1 Programme)	Department of Psychology
Institutional	Department of Psychology, Department of Computer Science, Department of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, Department of Industrial Engineering and Engineering Management, and Department of Business Administration and Analytics
Programmatic	MSc in Criminology, MSc DL in Criminology, PhD in Criminology
Programmatic	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (3 Years/180 credits, Doctor of Philosophy)
Programmatic	
Programmatic	
Institutional	Institutional Evaluation of The Philips College
Programmatic	Accounting and Finance (4 years, 240 ECTS, conventional)
Programmatic	Business Studies (2 years, 120 ECTS, Diploma)
Institutional	Institutional Evaluation of The Philips College
Programmatic	BA in Accounting and Finance (4 year, 240 ECTS, Bachelor, E-Learning)
Programmatic	Master of Science in Biotechnology

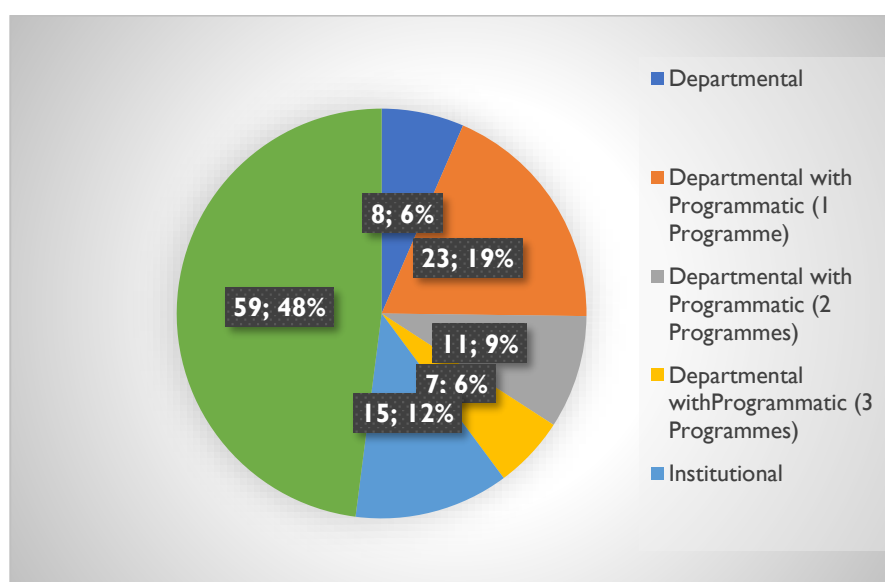
Programmatic	Master in Business Administration (MBA)
Programmatic	COMPUTER SCIENCE (4 Years Full-Time or 8 Years Part-Time, Bachelor)
Programmatic	Department of Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering and Informatics Master in Web and Smart Systems (Conventional and DL)
Programmatic	«Information and Communication Technology (2 Years, Plus an Optional Foundation Year, Diploma) Nicosia
Programmatic	
Programmatic	
Programmatic	“Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance (18 Months/90 ECTS, M.Sc.)”
Programmatic	BSc in Nautical Science program
Programmatic	Department of Psychology / MA in School Counseling and Guidance
Programmatic	MSc Financial Services
Programmatic	MSc Financial Services
Programmatic	BBA Tourism, Leisure and Events Management
Programmatic	Business Management (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor of Arts)
Programmatic	Computer Science
Departmental among Programmatic (3 Programmes)	PhD in Mathematics, Department of Mathematics and Statistics
Programmatic	Master in Mathematical Sciences

Programmatic	MSc Space & Branded Identity
Departmental (0 Programmes)	see above
Departmental among Programmatic (3 Programmes)	Department of Mathematics & Statistics
Programmatic	
Programmatic	MSc Data Analytics
Programmatic	MSc Data Analytics
Programmatic	Department of Veterinary Medicine Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM)
Programmatic	Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance (18 months, 90 ECTS, Master(MSc) Conventional & E-Learning
Programmatic	PrePrimary Education
Programmatic	School of Sciences
Programmatic	BSc Media Production
Programmatic	Intercultural Education and Mediation

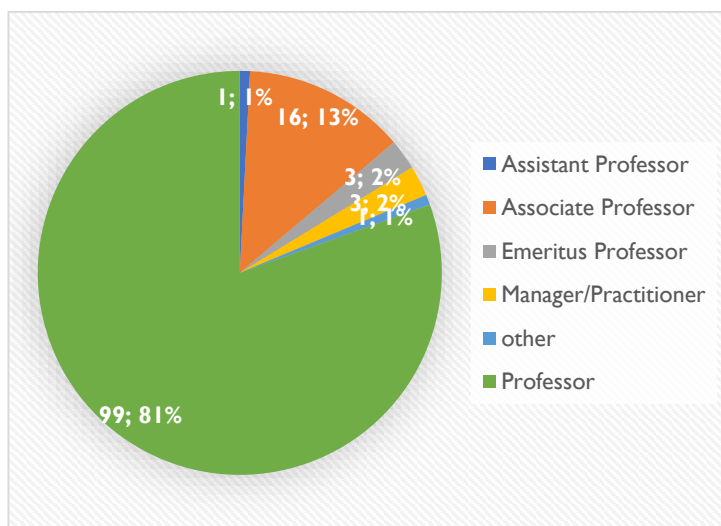
ANNEX III

Analysis of feedback received from Experts – Questionnaire: Experts feedback on the process of the evaluation/accreditation of internal quality assurance systems

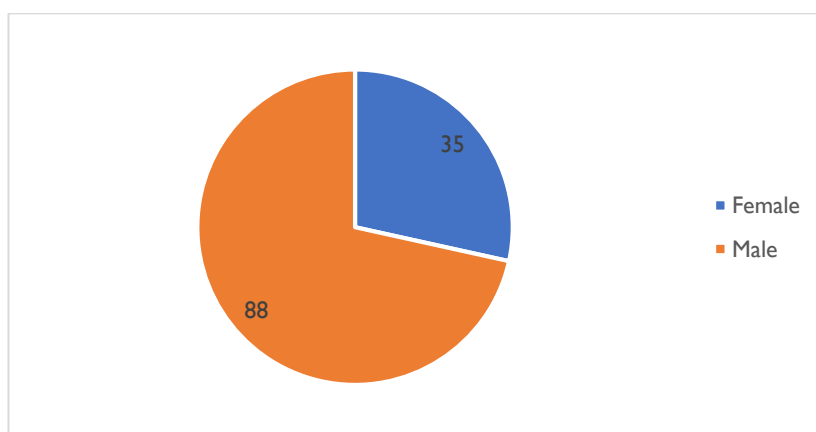
Type of External Evaluation



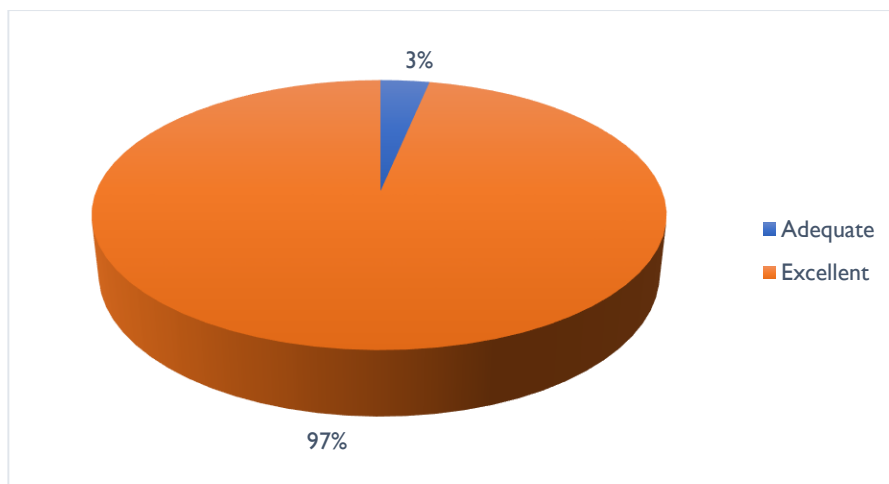
Capacity of the Respondent and Rank of the Respondent



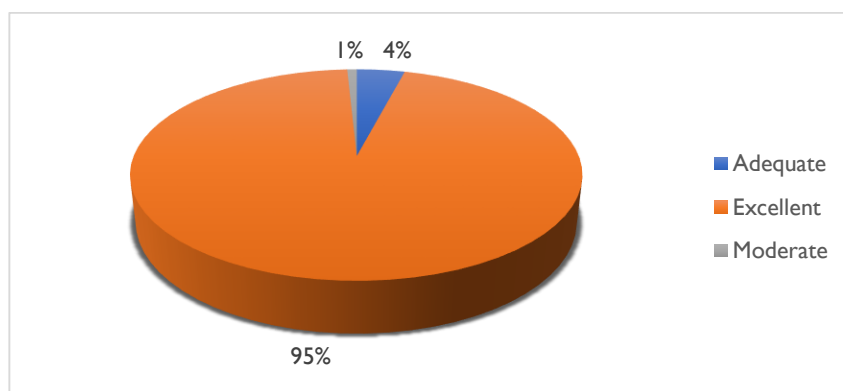
Gender of the respondent



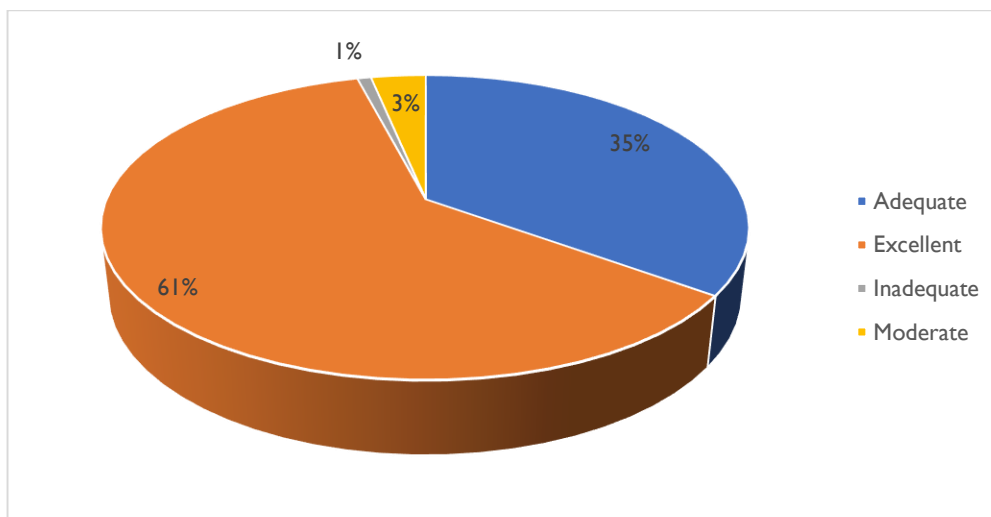
1. Quality of communication with the responsible CYQAA officer prior to the designated site visit



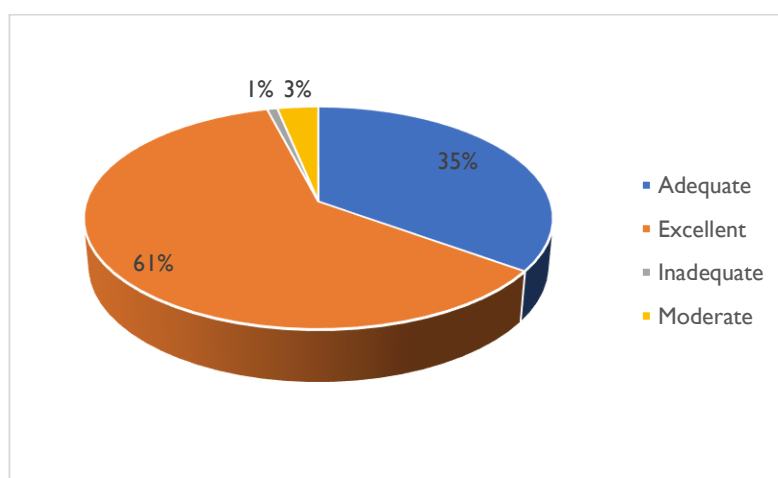
2. Quality of briefing by the responsible CYQAA officer before your visit to the Institution under



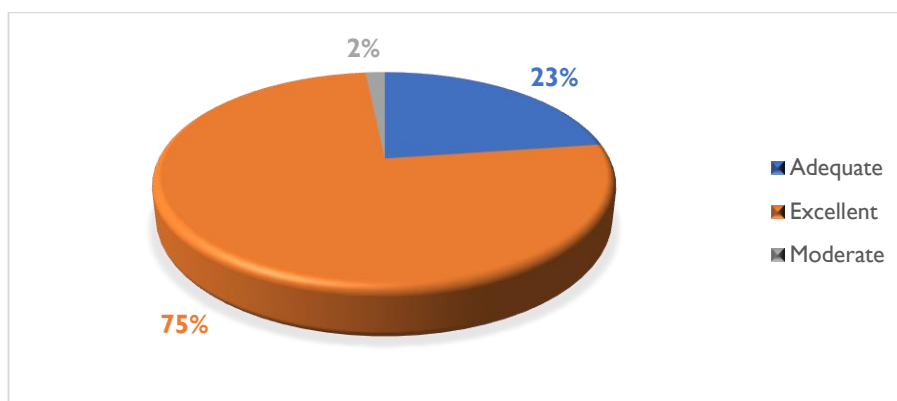
3. Adequacy of information in the Institution's application for evaluation:



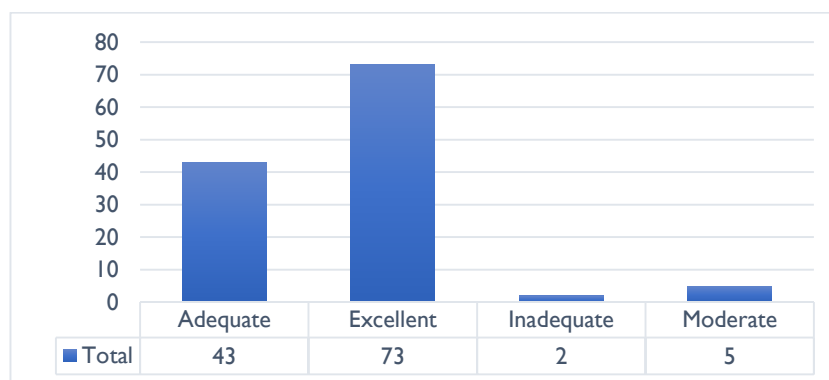
4. The length of the site visit was



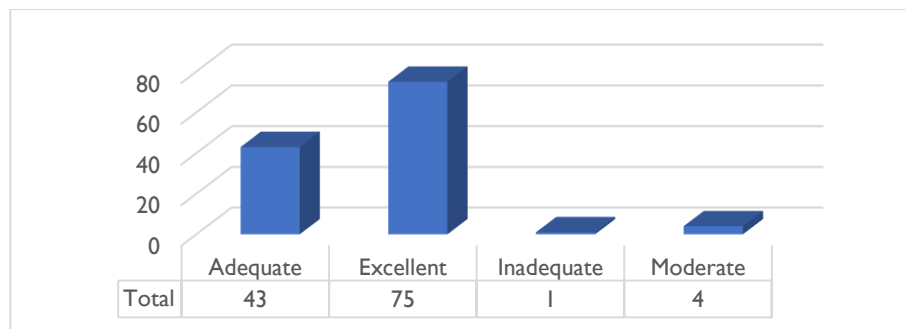
5. CYQAA guidelines for the drafting of the External Evaluation Report were:



6. The External Evaluation Report template was:



7. The time allowed to complete and submit the External Evaluation Report was:



Comments on the Overall External Evaluation Process

Comments of Experts on the Overall External Evaluation Process

A positive experience. Event organised very well and Mr Aletraris' support is very much appreciated.

A positive experience. Event organised very well and Mrs Kazakaïou's support was very much appreciated.

A very comprehensive visit that allowed for a thorough understanding of the programme under review and its development.

A very comprehensive visit that allowed for a thorough understanding of the programmes under review and their development.

Again, a pleasure!

All communication with CYQAA's representative was exemplary, professional and reliable, both before the committee's work was carried out and also when it was in progress. I enjoyed working with the other committee's members and carrying out this evaluation as well as visiting Cyprus.

An excellent experience driven by a professional team with clear communication from start to finish.

Communication and support from George Aletraris was excellent throughout. The content of the templates is good but they are complex Word documents which are difficult to use for shared writing (shared writing is the only way to complete the reports on time).
Everything were excellent organised especially regarding the communication with the responsible of CYQAA.
Excellent, full support was received from CYQQA.
Excellent guidance from, and cooperation with, the CYQAA officer!
George Aletraris was an excellent point of contact for this work and provided us with excellent support before, throughout and afterwards.
I found the evaluation process efficient
I have done many evaluations for DIPAE. I admire the professionalism by all colleagues and the excellence of process
I thank the CYQAA for the invitation and the good work provided before and after the site visit. Also the CYQAA responsible.
I think we did an honest job in our evaluation. However, we clearly did a more detailed evaluation, than was expected, and we were severely pressed by time. In hindsight, a clearer instruction to what was actually expected would have been helpful.
I was very happy with the support I received from CYQAA for this evaluation visit in every respect.
<p>I would like to express my sincere thanks to the CYQAA organisation and team(s) for the meaningful and thoughtful approach to have detailed assessment and acknowledgment with interactive and formal external reviewers of own national and local institutions and programmes, allowing private and public investments and visibility.</p> <p>The "adequacy" level refers mainly to the availability of some documentation in Greek language, and to some (fully understandable) changes of templates and forms that opened potentially new streams of discussion from previous to current assessments for clarification and moderation purposes.</p> <p>The process was managed very well, and the assessed departments, programmes, staff and students fully supportive and engaged. All in all, a rewarding and excellent experience, hopefully for all participants.</p>
<p>I would like to express my sincere thanks to the CYQAA organisation and team(s) for the meaningful and thoughtful approach to have detailed assessment and acknowledgment with interactive and formal external reviewers of own national and local institutions and programmes, allowing private and public investments and visibility.</p> <p>The "adequacy" levels refer mainly to the availability of some documentation in Greek language, and to some (fully understandable) changes of templates and forms that opened potentially new streams of discussion from previous to current assessments for clarification and moderation purposes, and some of the assessed institution's current policies/approaches that were highlighted in the external evaluation report.</p> <p>The process was managed very well, and the assessed departments, programmes, staff and students fully supportive and engaged. All in all, a rewarding and excellent experience, hopefully for all participants.</p>
Institutional, PPE Department and Program
it takes considerably more time to review the application itself before the actual visit (+/- 2 days). Also, it takes at least 2 days to complete and submit the report.
It was a good experience with the whole panel team and the CYQAA officer.
It was a pleasure to work with this committee and officer!

It was an absolute pleasure to work on the external examination. George Aletraris was supportive, professional and extremely proficient in communication. The examination board selected were experts in the field and I found the who process to be efficient and effective.
It's always difficult to remove something from a template - but at least once a year, the templates and sub-questions should be critically examined. As a general recommendation, you should remove at least a many entries as you add. It's already quite detailed and does not need more.
No problems with the work and this was a surprisingly good experience!
Site visits are many times scheduled too tight as all sessions and meetings become usually short to ask all the questions to collect the necessary information. The university should provide the responses in a concise manner while avoiding long discussions.
Smooth collaboration and positive conditions.
Some elements of the initial communication were quite slow (this time; on other visits the initial communication was excellent, faster and more detailed).
Given that the site visit was in Pafos, it would have been helpful for the CYQAA to offer hotel accommodation in that town, saving two+ hours of taxi travel on what was already a long visiting day.
There were several issues with the institutions's documentation (covered in our report), although this is of course not the fault of the CYQAA.
The evaluation template is comprehensive but is technically a very complex Word document, making it hard for several people to edit it simultaneously. Simultaneous editing is the only way to complete the report satisfactorily in the allotted time.
The agenda of the remote visit was tightly scheduled, which led to some meetings being cut short in order to accommodate both presentations and subsequent Q&A sessions. A recommendation to optimize the use of time is to send the presentations to the EEC ahead of the meetings, thus allowing for a brief summary during the actual sessions and thereby maximizing the available time for Q&A. This is a common issue that often arises during the visits in general either remote or conventional.
The composition of the EEC Team was excellent. There was a very good working alliance both between team members and with the responsible CYQAA officer
The CYQAA meets the highest standards regarding the evaluation process. keep up the fine work!
The form's instructions were not very clear on how to fill it in, therefore our assessment was more detailed than expected hence the time to fill in the form was longer.
The quality of the organisation by cyqaa is one of the best I know for this type of evaluation worldwide and the quality of the officer is outstanding.
On the substance, with some experience, I still think that the chance to speak to students is not designed as well as it should as institutions tend to "hand pick" students sometimes. My preference would be either that we pick them randomly from students listings or that the institutions provide a list of, say, 50 volunteers and the panel selects 10 or 15 within them.
The responsible CYQAA officer did an excellent job. I recieved any updated info requested as did my colleagues.
The responsible from CYQAA was excellent
The site visit went very smoothly and all aspects of our evaluation were supported very well by Mr Aletraris.

The support (Emily) was excellent and very pleasant!
The form was still difficult to use because of the many strange macro's in the form. Also, our committee strongly proposes to move to an online form and also to submit it online. The current system with a printed version with signatures and a PDF with electronic signatures is from a previous era. We strongly recommend to move to an online system in which electronic signatures are allowed, like in other countries.

The team was presented with all the necessary material in an exemplary way. We did an excellent evaluation in the best possible working conditions.

The university application was submitted in January 2022 but has become outdated after 18 months, particularly regarding faculty staff CVs. Additionally, there are inaccuracies and missing information, such as details about distance learning, which had to be requested from the university during the visit on the previous day. These issues are common and affect many applications.

To address these challenges, it is recommended to provide an updated version of the application prior to the visit, possibly as a separate document. Moreover, it would be helpful to provide the university with a checklist to ensure that all the expected documentation is uploaded weeks before the visit takes place.

During the visit, the agenda is typically packed, leaving limited time for presentations and Q&A sessions. Consequently, important questions and discussions often need to be skipped. To address this issue, it is recommended to provide a brief summary during the university's presentation, allowing more time for Q&A and discussions.

There was a little confusion regarding which templates to use and what should we written in each template. I guess the officer can explain better what the EEC was confused about.

This evaluation task was an absolute pleasure. It was highly efficient and productive. I would also wish to take this opportunity to thank Georgios Aletraris for his superb professionalism and great support. Mr Aletraris should also be commended for bringing together an excellent team of first-class scholars. Overall, the agency should be congratulated for being able to locate and attract some of the most accomplished and diligent academics to staff the evaluation committees.

This was a very positive experience for me. The organisation of my visit was excellent and operationally the programme evaluations were facilitated very well. Dr Lefkios Neophytou coordinated everything brilliantly.

Very efficient organisation of the whole process by the CYQAA officer, in a very friendly atmosphere.

Very organized.

Very wonderful to work with Christiana Maki, who could not have been more supportive

We completed 3 evaluations at CDA Limassol, Larnaca and Pafos. All communication with the Agency was exemplary. The documentation from the college was good, but very repetitive, resulting in a report that was much longer than it needed to be. It would be good to make greater use of reference to Appendices, rather than repeat the same information in different places.

Well executed evaluation workflow. Clear and concise and well taken care of as external evaluator.