Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 6/4/2024

External Evaluation Report
(E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: Larnaca College**

- **Town: Larnaca**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School/Faculty

- **Department/ Sector:** Department/Sector

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

  In Greek:

  Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων από Απόσταση

  In English:

  E-Learning Master in Business Administration

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

- **Programme's status: New**

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

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

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A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) has invited the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) to evaluate the "E-Learning Master of Business Administration" (hereafter E-MBA), which is a distance-learning Master programme offered by the *Larnaca College* in Larnaca (hereafter LC). This programme is a new proposed Distance Learning (DL) programme provided online.

The EEC consisted of four academics and a student member: the Chair of the Committee Professor Dionisis Philippas (ESSCA School of Management), the members Professor Periklis Gogas (Democritus University of Thrace, Greece), Professor Stratos Ramoglou (University of Southampton), the DL expert Professor Santi Caballé Llobet (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain), and the student representative member Mr. Niki Makri (University of Cyprus).

The evaluation for the programme took place at the LC premises on April 5th, 2024. Prior to and during the site visit, the EEC was provided with comprehensive documents and power point slides presented during the day. The EEC met with the senior management team, the faculty responsible for delivering the DL master programme, the administrative and other support staff, and one graduate student from the MBA conventional programme offered by LC.

Specifically, during the site visit, the EEC met with: the Director Charalambos Neophytoy, the Rector and Head of MBA Dr. Evanthis Mavrokordatos, the Vice rector and DL Unit Head Dr. Iaoninis Zenios, the Academic Coordinator Dr. Andreas Kirlappos, the Head Deputy Dr. Marios Ioannou and the Head of Administration Mrs. Elena Demetriou who is responsible for the functionality of LC. Additionally, the EEC met with some faculty members who will be teaching on the programme.

During the sessions, the senior management team of LC introduced the College, and the new E-MBA programme under review. The discussions covered a variety of aspects of the new programme, including its structure, academic issues, staff workload and organisation, assessments, infrastructure and resources available, the DL Unit and its capabilities, course delivery, and overall the sustainability of the programme in a highly competitive market. In the afternoon sessions, the EEC had the opportunity to meet with faculty members and a student who studied at LC. The subsequent session involved the administrative staff focusing on student support processes and the tools associated with them. The final session comprised a meeting with members of the senior management team to address any remaining questions and seek clarifications.

After each presentation, the EEC was given the opportunity to engage in a Q&A session to further explore details about the new programme. The questions posed by the EEC were specifically aimed at understanding aspects of the new programme, including learning objectives (LOs), programme structure, delivery methods, assessment approaches, assurance of learning (AoL), IT support, faculty issues, and the broader college-related issues. Additional evidence was provided concerning Quality Assurance measures, student support services, scholarship opportunities and incentives, examples of assessments and course delivery, information about the materials provided, and other learning

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methodologies. Furthermore, the EEC inquired about the programme's sustainability and the management's strategic plan for its future.

The EEC would like to express its gratitude to Mr. Costas Constantinou, the CYQAA coordinator, for his efficient management of the process and for his preparation for the evaluation day.

The EEC reviewed and examined the accreditation report and materials regarding the E-MBA programme provided by LC. As detailed below, we conclude there are serious concerns about the sustainability of the proposed E-MBA programme with regards to its compliance, the criteria and standards. The EEC has some strong suggestions provided below in each session.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Dionisis Philippas	Professor and Chairman	ESSCA School of Management
Periklis Gogas	Professor	Democritus University of Thrace
Stratos Ramoglou	Professor	University of Southampton
Santi Caballé Llobet	Professor	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
Niki Makri	Student representative	University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*

- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
  (a) *sub-areas*
  (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (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.***

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
    - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
    - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
    - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
    - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
    - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
    - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
    - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
    - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
    - *benefits from external expertise*
    - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
    - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
    - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
    - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
    - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
    - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*

- o *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- o *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - o *selection criteria*
  - o *intended learning outcomes*
  - o *qualification awarded*
  - o *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - o *pass rates*
  - o *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - o *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - o *key performance indicators*
  - o *profile of the student population*
  - o *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - o *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - o *learning resources and student support available*
  - o *career paths of graduates*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

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.

LC expects to launch the E-MBA programme in 2024, pending approval. The main findings regarding the new programme are as follows:

The E-MBA programme under review is a 1.5-year programme. It offers instruction in both Greek and English. To earn the E-MBA programme degree, it requires a successful completion of 90 ECTS points, consisting of 4 thematic core modules, with each core thematic module valued 7.5 ECTS, three specialised tracks namely, *Management*, *Wealth Management*, and *Real Estate Management (*of four modules, each one of 7.5 ECTS*)*, as well as a compulsory master thesis project which is worth 30 ECTS.

The EEC thoroughly examined all information concerning admission criteria, course learning outcomes (LOs), methods of instruction, assessment tools and procedures, and the main DL features of the online learning environment, as demonstrated by the members of LC. The EEC also had the opportunity to meet with faculty staff who are involved in the coordinating and teaching the programme as module instructors.

The EEC found the admission criteria to be appropriate and align with the requirements set by the Cypriot authorities. The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are communicated to the students.

The purpose, requirements, and LOs of the programme are aiming to the needs of Cypriot, Greek and international students. The curriculum maintains a disciplinary focus, structured around four main thematic modules, as well as a master thesis project that holds great importance within the programme (30 ECTS).

The EEC identified that there are internal policies and procedures in place with some evidence of quality assurance procedures, as part of an ongoing review and development, was provided by LC.

The faculty of the programme involves academics who (will) act as online instructors and interact regularly with the students. The staff from LC is partially involved in the new programme creation and most of them have long teaching experience in conventional programmes.

The final module grade results mostly from final exams, but also other assessment tools that are in place.

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

The EEC believes that the programme's structure is appropriate but can be revised in ways that result in better learning offering. The programme has some strengths, as follows:

1. The programme builds on an existing conventional programme currently running, with learning and operational processes meet learning expectations.
2. Management, faculty, and administrative staff appear to be committed to the planning and execution of the programme.
3. The programme offers a range of core disciplinary modules (learning modules that cover the key topics in business administration adequately).
4. The programme has three specialised tracks, with one of them (*Real Estate Management*) which is on the cutting edge for the Cypriot market.

5. The compulsory master thesis along with a flexible choice of topics is provided, enabling student needs for specialisation.

6. The faculty members that teach this programme's modules are experienced in conventional programmes and they have long teaching experience that meet the programme's expectations.

7. An elaborate quality assurance system, regularly executed, is put in place.

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.

Some suggestions for improvement are after below:

- There is a similar conventional programme and thus it poses questions about the sustainability of the proposed programme (or for both by jeopardising programmes vice versa).

- The programme seems to not have clear learning objectives and outcomes for diverse pool of student, and it is not sufficiently clear how these learning outcomes are mapped to the modules offered and the assessment tools used. A more explicit and consistent mapping would considerably aid the comprehension and execution effectiveness of the programme.

- Following the EEC's exchange of views and relevant experiences, a more localised orientation of learning modules linked more closely to the Cypriot and Greek , as well as a different one for international students, would benefit the program. The rebalancing could include the establishment of reoriented specialised courses for students with different management, economic and cultural backgrounds (i.e., Cypriot vs Greek vs foreign students). For example, real estate management, property and trust law of different regulatory policy practices should be distinguished for different audience.

- Certain revisions in the curriculum content could be envisaged for the future. Such revisions may include (but not limited to): (i) the inclusion of property and trust law for Wealth management is not coherent and might consider replaced; (ii) topics of highly ongoing interest (e.g., disaster management, ESG and sustainability compliance, digital transformation, energy management) in the local and the international market setting.

- The course includes core compulsory modules and specialization modules. Nonetheless, there is no possibility for a student in one specialization to select at least one course from another specialization. This would be beneficial to the students and add to the mentioned flexibility and adaptability of the program.

- The DL unit should be further developed towards a centralized service unit to support instructional design, integrate latest educational technologies and to offer faculty professional development in online teaching and learning (more details are provided in section 5).

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Partially compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Not applicable
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

> ### Sub-areas
>
> **2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
> **2.2 Practical training**
> **2.3 Student assessment**
> **2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities**

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
    - *among students*
    - *between students and teaching staff*
    - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the e-learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the e-learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
    - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
    - *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
    - ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
    - *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
    - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
    - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
    - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
    - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?*
- *How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

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.

The nature of the new programme is suitable for distance learning (DL) delivery, although the methodology provided is not optimal for this specific programme of study.

The college's learning management system supports online teaching, learning, and administrative processes. Currently, the college is transitioning from a Moodle installation to a Microsoft 365 for Education platform, which provides essential online education services. Within the Microsoft ecosystem, MS Teams integrates seamlessly with other productivity tools, such as OneDrive, Word, Excel and PowerPoint. This integration allows students to access and collaborate on documents directly within the MS Teams interface. In addition, the platform offers both

synchronous (via MS Teams) and asynchronous tools to enhance interactions between students and lecturers, among students, and with the learning materials. E-assessment features, including quizzes with automatic feedback and gamification mechanisms (via Kahoot), are available to assess student knowledge and increase engagement with the e-assessment process. The platform is also expected to introduce more advanced e-assessment methods to evaluate critical thinking and collaborative skills, though these were not demonstrated during the visit.

Each course will include up to 6 online sessions of synchronous communication (live teleconferencing) between lecturers and students. Double online sessions will be organized on the weekends of weeks 1, 5, and 9 (modular mode). Each session will consist of 7 hours of live teleconferencing at predetermined days and hours, with breaks for both lecturers and students. For those unable to attend live, teleconferences will be recorded as video lectures, including the lecturer in all the videos for non-verbal communication cues. Synchronous interaction will be supplemented with office hours and one-on-one online meetings.

Collaboration between lecturers and students, and among students, will be facilitated through online chats and discussion forums. Collaborative activities, such as group projects, are also encouraged, though the design, procedure, and technical support for these activities were not demonstrated.

Formative assessment is based on a mid-term assignment with personalized feedback, contributing up to 40% of the final grade, while summative assessment will include a mandatory online final exam (expected to use Proctoring), contributing up to 50% of the final grade. Assessment procedures will be completed with interactive quizzes and formative exercises in the weekly study guides for self-assessment, collectively contributing the remaining 10% of the final grade.

Moreover, from the discussions the EEC had with the management and the academic staff, the programme planned, as it stands now, seems complex and inflexible. The EEC notes that:

The new program seems overbearing to the resources and the limited experience in Distance Learning of faculty and staff of LC.

The plan is to start the E-MBA programme and delivering it in two modes:

> a) The traditional semester approach, with a standard structure of courses delivered contemporaneously on various days within a week through the semester for 13 weeks.

> b) The modular approach where courses are delivered sequentially, and each course lasts for 6 weeks including 39 teaching periods.

Moreover, the EEC was told that the delivery will be done in both English and Greek. According to the above, 4 new DL programs will start running simultaneously at the LC. As DL is an endeavour quite different and even more challenging than conventional program delivery, this will significantly strain the resources in both human and physical capital of the college.

Another important aspect of this new endeavour is that LC strives to participate in the global DL market for online delivery of an MBA course. The current student body of LC as we were told in various times is almost 100% local. The everyday contact and dealing with prospective and later registered students from various parts of the world, will be a new experience for the college and one that might stretch the limits of the current admin staff and possibly the faculty as well.

A) It is not clear how the college is going to deal with the different time zones of a -possibly- international student body.

B) All the above, the EEC believes that will put a significant pressure to the administrative and teaching staff of the college.

C) The requirement for the induction to the E-MBA program is to have a satisfactory level of "digital competency". Nonetheless, it is unclear how this can be verified before a decision is made. Additionally, it is not clear what will happen if a student does not meet this digital competency criterion.

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

The provision of personalized feedback on assignments and during teleconference sessions, along with feedback based on rubrics and peer assessment, are considered best practices, even though they were not demonstrated during the visit. The EEC recognizes the benefits of collaboration facilitated by online teams and discussions. The weekly study guides, which guide students' weekly tasks, are also highlighted as best practices. The EEC encourages the college to maintain and enhance these aspects of their DL model.

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 notes that the college's DL methodology replicates the conventional format online, without addressing the unique needs and expectations of distance students who study in isolation and require constant engagement. In addition, DL methods are not clearly defined, and they do not support the specific profiles of full- and part-time students with professional and/or family commitments, who need to learn efficiently and timely. In particular, the study guides do not specify the workload and study time required for each weekly activity, making it difficult for online students to effectively plan their studies. In addition, the duration of live teleconferencing sessions (7 hours) exceeds the optimal length for online sessions, potentially affecting the online teaching-learning process and outcomes. The EEC strongly recommends that the college revises its DL methodology to ensure it effectively supports its students' needs.

The EEC also recommends that the college seek external and voluntary accreditations (e.g., EFQUEL, EADTU, QS Stars)

to evaluate and enhance its DL quality assurance. In addition, establishing cooperative agreements with online universities or creating joint online programs could provide valuable insights into effective DL practices. While recognizing the value of interaction and collaboration, the EEC notes challenges with synchronous teleconferences and teamwork among students in an international, multi-time zone context. The college is advised to adapt its DL model to increase asynchronous interaction and collaboration to accommodate this diversity. Finally, the adoption of advanced feedback mechanisms, such as intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents, is encouraged to provide immediate and automated feedback, helping students self-assess their progress.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Non-compliant
2.2	Practical training	Partially compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Partially compliant

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**
> **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**
> **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the teaching staff qualified to teach in the e-learning programme of study?*
- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

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.

The EEC met with the programme coordinator and the faculty members, including both full time and adjunct staff, who are involved in the new programme. The main findings are as follows:

1. The EEC noted that the LC outsources the technical training and support for distance learning to faculty members, who can participate in training programs to enhance their ability to deliver quality online teaching. These training programs are recognized for professional development relevant to distance learning, although the certification was not found in the documentation.

2. The programme is supported by faculty members involved in the conventional (corresponding) MBA, who all possess teaching and professional experience, as well as experience in teaching in other conventional programmes.

Strengths

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

The EEC found the following strengths during the Q&A session with the faculty members:

- Most of the faculty members involved in the new E-MBA programme are experienced instructors in other conventional programmes.

- The faculty is well-informed of the LC's resources, budget allowances, promotion strategies, and workload criteria.

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 has some recommendations in this area, as follows:

- The EEC observed that the faculty staff are not adequately prepared to address the challenges of distance learning, with most having limited experience in DL, mainly during the pandemic. The EEC strongly recommends that the faculty staff of the new online programme be fully involved in in-house training programs on DL methodologies and technologies, which are certified for professional development.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*

> - *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*
>
> *You may also consider the following questions:*
>
> - *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
> - *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
> - *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

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.

The college's Microsoft 365 for Education platform, especially MS Teams, offers a wide range of learning analytics tools to monitor student progression and performance by collecting data from students. This data helps identify at-risk students, thus enabling lecturers to take corrective actions. However, the specific analytics of interest, such as students with lower grades, limited participation, or incomplete activities, were not specified, and the potential positive impacts of these corrective measures on student success were not presented during the meetings.

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

The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a very good student-lecturer ratio (1/25) and student feedback is very positive.

Student feedback at the college level is actively sought at the end of each course through online surveys and on an ongoing basis throughout course delivery. However, evidence of how this feedback translates into specific measures for improvement and action plans implemented by the college was not provided during the meeting.

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.

More sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI and specifically Machine Learning are encouraged to be used to monitor and predict student performance and dropout in order to be able to provide timely

The EEC observed that only one student (an alumnus) was present during the student session. Even though the programme under review is new, the EEC had expected to engage with more students to gain a broader perspective on their opinions and experiences.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Partially compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

Sub-areas

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources
5.2 Physical resources
5.3 Human support resources
5.4 Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - o *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - o *Problem solving scenarios*
  - o *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - o *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - o *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - o *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*

- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

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.

The proposed courses have a syllabus plus a weekly study guide that includes relevant information: summary, introductory remarks, aims/objectives, learning outcomes, keywords, required and supplementary multimodal materials, self-assessment exercises/activities, and recommended study time.

The college's DL Unit is responsible for providing pedagogical support for designing, creating, implementing and evaluating online courses. This Unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative and summative assessment in accordance with international standards. The Unit also provides a Faculty Handbook for this specific programme with guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning that establishes the main characteristics a distance learning course should have. It is a good reference that guarantees the quality and homogeneity of this programme's courses and college's future DL programmes.

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

The DL Unit is considered a best practice, due to its potential structure, resources, infrastructures and services devoted to enhanced distance learning. The EEC believes that it can be a powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the provided teaching while providing a solid reference to new faculty members to face distance learning.

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.

Based on the study guides provided, the EEC recommends adding the estimation of the study time for each weekly study material and activities and provide students with a clearer view on the expected workload for each course.

The EEC also notes that some required readings in the study guides consist of entire volumes, which may not be suitable for part-time students who need to study efficiently. It is recommended to provide clear indications of the relevant sections or pages of these volumes in the study guides to make them more manageable.

Finally, the EEC is pleased to see that there are specific regulations in place in relation to students misbehaving, including plagiarism or academic misconduct. However, with the emergence of LLMs and AI generative systems (ChatGPT, Gemini, etc.), the EEC encourages further development of rules, and communicating them clearly to students, to prevent online (as well as offline) academic fraud while teaching about the opportunities to correctly use these new technologies in DL.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Partially compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Not applicable
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The E-MBA is a new programme offered by Larnaca College in Larnaca. It has a 1.5-year content, design, and structure.

The EEC acknowledges the significant effort made in preparation for the launch of the new DL programme. This included the development of the online platform, the enrichment of faculty members' expertise, the quality assessments, the design of programme structure, and a curriculum that aligns with comparable programmes. Support for the programme comes from LC's Distance Learning Unit and their administrative services.

Nevertheless, and in order to establish the sustainability and the competitive advantage of the new programme over the coming years, and taking into account the recent developments and competition, there is room for improvement. Indeed, we have identified various areas where we see that further development is recommended, and we have elaborated on those in each section above. In summary, the EEC suggests the following:

The programme is potentially compatible with DL delivery, yet the methodology implemented is not suitable for the specific programme of study, as LC is merely transferring the conventional format's methodology and content online. Therefore, the EEC strongly recommends revising the DL model based on the feedback provided in this report and through active participation in the EU community of online learning, while ensuring that methods of interaction and collaboration, including online synchronous teleconferences and real-time student collaboration, are sustainable in future years, particularly if the programme is expanded internationally.

Finally, the EEC suggests incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN Agenda 2030 in the training programmes for the faculty staff, in order to redesign the learning materials and activities accordingly with the aim to empower students with emerging competencies and skills (climate change, gender equality, global and ethical engagement, etc.) to take action for a more sustainable world.

The EEC would like to thank all involved in *Larnaca College* for their high engagement throughout the evaluation process - and for providing a rich set of supporting documents and videos before and during the site visit. We also want to thank them for their great hospitality.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Costas Constantinou for organizing and facilitating the evaluation process.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Dionisis Philippas	
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Date: 6/4/2024