

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

Date: February 27, 2023

- **Higher Education Institution:**
American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo
- **Town:** Paphos
- **School/Faculty:** Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA)
- **Department:** Department of Industrial Engineering & Engineering Management
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1

In Greek:

Βιομηχανική Μηχανική ((4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 244 ECTS, Πτυχίο(BS))

In English:

Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering (4 academic years, 244 ECTS, Bachelor(BS))

Programme 2

In Greek:

Διαχείριση Μηχανικής ((1.5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 96 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό (MS))

In English:

Master of Science in Engineering Management (1.5 academic years, 96 ECTS, Master(MS))

- **Department's Status:** New

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of Improvement and Recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.3.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

1.1 Mission and strategic planning

1.2 Connecting with society

1.3 Development processes

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the "**Compliant**" rating in all three sub-areas.

We first tackle the section's Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***"The EEC confirmed that AUBM has a clear vision and strategic orientation with a strong focus on contributing to the local community. In addition, there is an effective strategy for the recruitment of competent and qualified academic staff that will complement existing staff as well as for the recruitment of local and international students. Moreover, projections of student numbers were found to be quite realistic."***

EEC noted the strength ***"It is noteworthy that servicing the community is part of the educational activities against which students are assessed. This is an innovative practice that apparently instils students with a sense of responsibility towards their communities and materially contributes towards the strategic orientation and mission of AUB."***

It is also remarkable that AUBM has invested heavily in market research. This research has informed the development of programmes capable of recruiting adequate numbers of students and simultaneously meeting the needs of the local economy.

The EEC has no doubt that the reputation of AUB combined with the generous allowance in research time provided to academic staff (40% of their time is devoted to research) will help AUBM recruit excellent academics who can complement the strengths of existing staff."

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: AUBM colleagues are encouraged to ensure that, during their growth stages, they recruit a diverse body of academics that shapes a truly international community of scholars.

In addition, it would be good to explore whether they can make admissions criteria more flexible (by not relying only on SATs) so that to attract more Cypriot and international students. This would help ensure diversity in the student community that would further strengthen the international experience of students.

Institution's Response:

We thank the EEC for an excellent and constructive feedback.

- In terms of faculty recruiting, we highly value diversity. Our academic job advertisements are normally posted in international venues (e.g. Chronicle of higher education, INFORMS, and IISE), and we expect to receive applications from around the globe. We also aim to circulate the job advertisements among colleagues in Cyprus and Europe.
- The admissions team of AUB Mediterraneo is exploring alternatives to SAT that are common in Cyprus and Europe such as the British-based AS exam. In principle, either the SAT scores would be required or the International AS-level qualifications. The acceptance decision will then be made on the AS-level grades and the high school grades.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

- 2.1 System and quality assurance strategy
- 2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section and the quality indicators of its two sub-areas.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***“The department has a clear plan for quality assurance (QA) that is detailed and covers all the relevant areas that need monitoring. This plan for QA involves external stakeholders for example.***

in processes such as recruitment and promotion. In the case of promotion, an appropriately large number of external reviewers is involved.

The university does not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment. These are detailed in the university’s mission statement. Further, the Office of Student Affairs ensures equal access to students with disabilities.

The university appoints the Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) that prepares of the institution for external evaluations and accreditation, and at the same time ensures that the institution adheres to its own internal quality standards. There is a 5-year cycle for the internal review of academic and administrative units. There is a solid procedure set in place for the periodic review of academic programmes.

Course and instructor evaluations are performed by teaching surveys given by students. Academic staff are evaluated annually and are reviewed for promotion. Tenured staff are also reviewed every 5 years to ensure that they are progressing.

There are programmes in place for engagement with the local community. The IE students take courses that involve them with the local community.

Courses have clearly defined learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been defined for the assessment of quality. There is a clear procedure for preventing and dealing with plagiarism. Further, procedures are set in place for dealing with students’ grievances. The department has all relevant information for students on its programmes of study including admission criteria. There seems to be a variety of teaching methods.

The department has appropriate building facilities allocated. They are currently being completed with a deadline of August 2023. However, they have backup facilities in place in case of any delays. There are classrooms and computer laboratories to satisfy the needs for teaching. There is a large volume of electronic resources for the library and technological infrastructure.

The department assigns each students a tutor to support them with academic matters. Further, each staff member assigns 2-3 hours per week for student office hours to support students. The student-staff ratio is very good. The Office of student affairs has procedures in place to support student wellbeing needs and offers counselling services.

The MS EM degree has flexible study options that allow for students to study part time or study while fully employed.

The university has in place a policy for the protection and exploitation of intellectual property.”

EEC also noted that ***“The promotion procedure in place is very elaborate to ensure fairness and meritocracy. They employ 12 externals to review each candidate. The student – staff ratio at the moment with the current projections in student numbers and the current projection in staff hiring is excellent.***

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: There are no problem areas but we would like to state some soft recommendations.

1. The admission criteria are defined clearly by the department. They state that the highest number of admissions will be from Cyprus and Greece. However, they should think about providing alternative admission criteria for students from public Greek schools. This is a large number of possible candidates with strong backgrounds.
2. Even though the recruitment procedure proposed is solid and adequate, we would like to see more procedures set in place to ensure a more diverse profile of faculty with respect to academic career, national background, and gender.
3. We realize that initially the Library will grow eventually to include study spaces for students. However, provisions should be made to ensure that there sufficient study spaces available initially.
4. We would like more clarity on how staff is involved in decision making and monitoring the programmes of study.

Institution’s Response:

We thank you for these recommendations and address them one by one.

1. As aforementioned, alternatives to the admittedly restrictive SAT admission requirement are currently being assessed such as the utilization of the AS exam. In addition, with the hope of establishing more acceptance for SAT in the future, the admissions and marketing team have identified third-party companies that can help students prepare for SAT.
2. As previously discussed, our academic job advertisements are normally posted in international venues (e.g. Chronicle of higher education, INFORMS, and IISE), and we expect to receive applications from around the globe. We also aim to circulate the job advertisements among colleagues in Cyprus and Europe.
3. In addition to the online library, the current facility of AUBM includes a small physical library but the facility has a large multipurpose room that can easily be used as a library extension and quiet studying space. In the new facility that AUBM intends to move to in academic year 2024-25, there exists a dedicated physical library for students. Kindly find attached the file called “07.14.690.004_Annx4- Library.pdf” that presents the schematic design. In addition to providing the faculty and students with the needed online resources and e-books to facilitate teaching and research, the library also facilitates the procurement of local and foreign books, teaching materials, and paraphernalia. The library coordinates with every department to identify the books needed for teaching and the expected number of books. The library then procures for them whether the books were online or hard copy, and provides them to the

students at cost. The library will also join the Cyprus Libraries Consortium to tap into its resources and also to contribute to it with the valuable resources at AUB Mediterraneo and support its research agenda. .

4. Initially there will only be one dedicated staff member in the IEEM department that will provide administrative support. This staff member will serve on departmental committees related to student guidance and advising. The role of this staff member, which is expected to be a local hire, will be to direct students to the right resources (e.g. academic advisors) and to follow-up on their needs. This staff member could eventually be promoted to a “department manager” position and assume a bigger role in student recruiting, student support, and operations management. Another staff member that will provide partial support to IEEM is a lab instructor. Given the important role of lab experiments in our learning outcomes assessment, this staff member will serve on departmental committees for quality assurance and accreditation.

3. Administration

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the **“Compliant”** rating of this section.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***“Based on the evidence from the Department's application and site visit, the evaluation identified several strengths and areas for improvement regarding the administration of the Department. The Department has a strong focus on ethical conduct and has a well-defined procedure for dealing with student grievances. Additionally, the inclusion of a student representative with voting power in monthly department meetings is commendable. The Department has also established an Office of Research to support sponsored research grants and provide administrative support for start-ups formed by faculty.***

However, the evaluation also revealed several areas for improvement. The Department could be more aggressive with respect to planning for external teaching staff and adjunct professors to support the initial phases of the department with respect to the teaching load. Additionally, there is lack of diversity among the teaching faculty, most of whom are from AUB Lebanon. Given that the Department is based in an EU country and aims to attract an international profile of students, it should employ faculty members from different European countries to enhance its internationalization efforts. Finally, the Department management procedures do not mention the participation of staff in the decision-making process through a representative with voting powers. EEC noted also that “The administrative process is top-tier. There is nothing specifically innovative, but the AUBM follows and abides by high standards.”

EEC listed the strengths below:

- Student representative in the monthly department meetings has voting power along with the faculty members.
- There will be an Office of Research that will support and administer sponsored research grants from private as well as government funds. Moreover, it will provide administrative support for intellectual property and management, commercialization, and technology transfer. Notably, together with the Intellectual Property Advisory Committee it will also provide administrative support for Start-Ups formed by faculty.
- There is a well-defined set of principles of ethical conduct that all members of the department should abide and deal with issues related to academic integrity, discrimination and harassment, and abuse of authority among others.
- There exists a detailed procedure for dealing with student grievance related to academic freedom and misconduct and non-academic misconduct. The Dean, Office of Student Affairs, faculty and the Student Grievance Panel may be involved depending on the nature of the student complaints to facilitate its resolution in the most effective way.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:

1. More planning needed for external teaching staff and adjunct professors to support the initial phases of the department with respect to the teaching load.
2. Most teaching faculty is from the AUB Lebanon which in turn implies a low degree of diversification and internationalization. Given that the newly formed department will be based on an EU country, and the fact that it will be an English-speaking institution, it should utilize the vast pool of faculty members that could employ from different European countries. This is also of crucial importance given the international profile of the students it is intended to attract.
3. The department management procedures do not mention participation of the staff in the decision process through a representative with voting powers.

Institution's response:

We address these points one by one.

1. An initial course offering plan has been delineated to cover the needs of the first two years of operations. That plan revealed the need for instructors that can teach general engineering and management topics, especially at the graduate level. This need will be met by 1) attempting to locally recruit part-time instructors, possibly from engineering and management professionals that hold a graduate engineering degree and have substantial experience of work in industry/academia, and 2) attempting to attract visiting professors from Cyprus and Europe. In addition, we will solicit adjunct professors from local and European universities. We have started discussions on this with our research collaborators in Europe.
2. At the start-up phase, and to ensure the same quality is offered at AUB Mediterraneo as that of AUB, tapping into the existing professors at AUB is appropriate. As previously mentioned though, future academic job advertisement will be posted on international websites and will target Europe. This is along with the plan to hire local and European part-timers, visiting professors, and adjunct faculty which increases the level of diversity in the department. Recruiting one or two local staff members will also add to the diversity.
3. The university charter (please find attached *07.14.687_Annx1- Charter.pdf*) which the committee did not have access to, highlights the important involvement of the staff members in decision making. In *APPENDIX A: SENATE BYLAWS* and *APPENDIX B: BYLAWS OF THE FACULTIES/SCHOOLS* of the charter, every faculty committee and every senate committee includes staff representatives. For example, the Senate's University Research Board (URB) has in its membership a representative from the Office of Research; the Faculty's Academic Affairs Committee has in its membership a representative from the Office of Admissions; etc. The departmental committees are no different.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section and the quality indicators of its two sub-areas.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***“The EEC is happy with the way in which teaching and teaching-related activities such as assessment are conducted. We confirmed that teaching is highly student-centered and that the processes and activities surrounding the delivery of the educational mission are consistent with international practices.”***

EEC noted also that ***“What stands out in terms of innovative practices is the particularly balanced curriculum between engineering and management courses that is complemented with the more holistic academic experience secured via the application of the US liberal arts model of study.***

The BSc students are also supported by individual tutors/mentors that are both academics as well as MSc students that help with day-to-day educational activities. By the same token, MSc students are given opportunities to hone their academic knowledge by acting as instructors of BSc students. This apparently helps improve student experience and strengthen the ties amongst students.

The students enjoy a varied mix of teaching activities – gaining a fine blend of academic and practical insights.

In addition, students engage closely with research practices. For example, there are PG students that have even managed to publish their research conducted during their studies.”

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:

1. After extensive discussions with staff, students, and the study of the relevant material the EEC was in the pleasant position to confirm that the educational model is sound.
2. Colleagues in charge of the Paphos campus are encouraged to ensure that students feel members of the AUB community, via common events and/or exchanges with the Beirut campus (this was deemed important due to the fact that during the first years the student population in the Paphos campus is expected to be rather low).

Institution’s Response:

We address these points one by one.

1. We thank the EEC for the positive feedback that will significantly contribute to improving our teaching methods.

2. This is an excellent suggestion. The constituents of AUB Mediterraneo are keen on having strong ties at all levels with the mother institution. Collaboration will include students exchange, faculty exchange, joint research projects, and joint events. We also plan to encourage AUB Mediterraneo students to participate remotely in career development and research events that will take place in AUB Lebanon.

5. Teaching Staff

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of three sub-areas.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***Based on the strengths and areas for improvement identified during the site visit and evaluation, the teaching aspect of the new department appears to have several positive features. The faculty members for the new department are highly qualified and come from reputable institutions, which ensures that the teaching quality is likely to be high. Additionally, the student to faculty ratio is favorable, which suggests that students will have ample access to faculty members for guidance and mentorship.***

However, the lack of diversification in the faculty may limit the perspectives and experiences that are brought to the classroom. Therefore, it is recommended that measures be taken to attract new faculty from other institutions, particularly from EU universities, to broaden the range of ideas and approaches in the classroom.

Overall, the department appears to be well-positioned to provide high-quality teaching, but attention should be paid to ensuring that the faculty remains diverse and well-rounded.

EEC listed the strengths below:

- All the faculty for the new department will be coming from the AUB Lebanon which means that the expertise and credibility is insured.
- The student to faculty ratio is 15 which is very good and in par with top universities.
- The faculty of the General Education curriculum consists of 19 members, thereby it is considered more than sufficient to cover the teaching workload.
- The faculty of the department consists of 9 full time and 5 part time. Considering that initially there will be a transient period of 4 years until the department will have the full capacity of students for all the years, this number is considered satisfactory.
- All full-time faculty members have very good credentials with PhD’s from established universities mainly from the US.
- There exists a well-defined procedure for instructor course evaluation at the end of each course, with questionnaires given to the students.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: The fact that all faculty will be coming from the AUB Lebanon is both a strength and a weakness in this case given that it decreases the degree of diversification. It is recommended that measures should be taken to attract new faculty from EU universities, keeping the core from AUB Lebanon to preserve the character and culture of AUB.

Institution’s Response

This is exactly what we have in mind. Our plan is to have a core group of homogenous faculty seconded from AUB Lebanon to build-up the department and transmit the AUB culture. In addition,

we will actively attempt to recruit a diverse faculty body from Cyprus and the EU that will help grow the department and integrate it with the local community. This will be done by hiring local and European part-timers, visiting professors, and adjunct faculty members.

6. Research

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section and the quality indicators of its four sub-areas.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***“The department’s research policy is in line with its mission. The department promotion and recruitment procedures take into account research excellence. Further, the facilities provided are adequate for research development including the large volume of electronic resources of the Library. The thesis option of the MS EM programme provides the students an excellent opportunity to develop their research skills and reach the level of being able to publish in academic journals. The institution has an open access policy consistent with European policy. They have a policy on research ethics that comply with international rules on research ethics. Academic staff of the department publish in high-ranking journals and attend top international conferences. There is a strong link with the industry in their research activities. Further, they support research activity by providing Sabbaticals for academic staff and internal funding.”***

EEC listed the strengths below:

- The thesis option of the MS EM degree provides an excellent environment for students to develop their research skills under the supervision of the academic staff. Their assessment of the thesis is based on whether the thesis is publishable in an academic journal.
- Their Library has an exceptionally large volume of electronic resources.
- Academic staff members have very good publication profiles in top international journals.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: There are no areas of improvement.

Institution’s Response: We thank the EEC for their positive feedback.

7. Resources

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) rating of “**Compliant**” for this section.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant

The university noted the findings of the EEC: ***“AUBM is a financially robust project. The inspected resources and facilities were found to be state-of-the art. As importantly, the planned developments in terms of further facilities sound really appropriate and well thought-out.*”**

EEC listed the strengths below:

- This is a very modern campus with state-of-the-art facilities and technological equipment.
- The electronic library is impressive. AUBM will benefit from the top-notch electronic resources already available in the Beirut campus.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: It would be worth exploring the possibility of creating a larger-scale library that could potentially be accessible to the local community as well.

Institution’s Response:

In the new facility that AUBM intends to move to in academic year 2024-25, there exists a dedicated large-enough physical library for students. Kindly find attached the file called “*07.14.690.004_Annx4- Library.pdf*” that presents the schematic design. We can surely consider opening it to the local community.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Based on the findings of the evaluation of the proposed Department, there are both positive aspects and areas for improvement that should be considered to ensure that the Department achieves its full potential in delivering high-quality education.

The strengths identified in the evaluation are significant. The faculty members are highly qualified, and the student to faculty ratio is favorable, which will ensure that students have access to guidance and mentorship from their teachers. The Department also has a strong focus on ethical conduct, and the inclusion of a student representative with voting power in monthly department meetings is commendable. The Office of Research established to support sponsored research grants and provide administrative support for start-ups formed by faculty is also a positive feature.

The evaluation also identified some positive features of the quality assurance plan for the Department, including the involvement of external stakeholders in processes such as recruitment and promotion.

However, there are also areas for improvement that were identified during the evaluation.

1. One such area is the lack of diversity among the teaching faculty, which could limit the perspectives and experiences offered to students. The Department could take steps to address this issue by increasing its efforts to recruit a more diverse faculty.
2. An area for improvement is in the facilities available for the Department. Although the Department has appropriate building facilities allocated, they are not yet complete, with a deadline of August 2023. While backup facilities are in place, the Department should closely monitor the progress of the construction to ensure that there are no delays in the completion of the building.
3. Overall, the evaluation of the proposed Department has identified both strengths and areas for improvement. The Department should focus on addressing the areas for improvement to ensure that it is fully staffed, has a more diverse faculty, and is able to provide high-quality education that is consistent with international practices.

Institution's Response:

We thank the EEC again for the positive and highly useful comments. For the areas of developments, our plan is as follows.

1. We seek to enhance diversity by targeting local and EU faculty recruits in future full-time, part-time, visiting, and adjunct employment positions. Efforts are already in-place to meet part of the teaching needs of the first year of operations from this pool. Moreover, diversity will be enhanced and more ties will be built with the local community by hiring local staff members.
2. Construction works are ongoing overtime and over weekends to expedite the campus completion. A short delay, if any, can be absorbed by the current facility at the Paphos Innovation Center, especially that the number of students will be relatively limited in the first year of operations. Hence, the current facility is a state-of-the-art facility with all the needed classrooms, offices, and student spaces to normally operate the university without any shortcomings.
3. At the start-up phase, and to ensure the same quality is offered at AUB Mediterraneo as that of AUB, tapping into the existing professors at AUB is appropriate. As previously mentioned though, future academic job advertisement will be posted on international websites and will target Europe. This is along with the plan to hire local and European part-timers, visiting

professors, and adjunct faculty which increases the level of diversity in the department and its excellence.

Once AUB Mediterraneo is granted the official license to operate in Cyprus, recruiting locals and Europeans will be much easier, especially that the license will give assurance to the potential recruits that the university will definitely commence operations in the fall of 2023-24 and they can seriously consider an offer from it.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

| Name | Position | Signature |
|-----------------------|---|------------------|
| Wassim El Hajj | Rector | |
| Bacel Maddah | Department Head | |
| Boushra Rahal | Quality Assurance and Institutional Improvement | |

Rania Hussein

Strategy and Risk

Date: February 27, 2023