



Doc. 300.2.2

Institution Response (Institutional Evaluation)

Date: 11/02/2022

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Mesoyios College
- **Town:** Limassol
- **Institution Status:** Currently Operating

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.300.2.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the Institution in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, in the section building facilities, student welfare services, infrastructure, the HEI must respond on the comments and scoring of the EEC.*
- *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. 300.2.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

BUILDING FACILITIES - STUDENT WELFARE SERVICES - INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Building facilities

1.1 Plans and licenses

Findings reported by EEC

1.1.1.1 There is a plan but does not display the plots allocated for parking spaces.

1.1.1.2 There is no general site plan for all the facilities. The building, parking area 1 and parking area 2 are indicated on three separate plans.

1.1.2 There is no operating licence or a valid Final Inspection and Approval Certificate by the municipality of Limassol.

Action/Response

1.1.1.1 We submit the plans including the allocation of the parking spaces for Mesoyios College ([see Annex I](#)).

1.1.2 Mesoyios College submitted the Certificate of Final Approval (Πιστοποιητικό Έγκρισης) issued by the Local Authorities ([see Annex II](#)). We submitted revised plans to the Local Authorities ([see Annex III](#)) to renew the licences and proceed with renewance of the Certificate of Final Approval as well.

1.2 Other facilities

Findings reported by EEC

1.2.6 The College relies on parking spaces rented at remote locations 200m and 500m far from the College's main building. These parking spaces are approved as per the temporary planning permit based on rental agreements submitted with the planning application. However, the temporary planning permit expired on 20/08/2021 and so have the rental agreements.

1.2.7 All the parking spaces shall be clearly marked and accessible.

FINAL REMARKS

According to the discussions with the College's President during the evaluation sessions and based on the evidence presented during the session, the College is currently in the process of renewing the planning and building permits so that it will be entitled to acquire a Final Approval Certificate. Additionally, a small number of deviations from the permitted (expired) drawings have been observed but are minor. All the above are supported by drawings and evidence presented during the session and have been sent by the undersigned civil engineer to CYQAA. Finally, it is suggested that a grace period is granted to the College to sort out the above issue and it is noted that since the College relies on rented parking spaces any issued permit will always be temporary, and its duration will always coincide with the duration of the parking rental agreements.

Action/Response

The college updated the rental agreements for parking spaces ([see Annex IV](#)). We also submit the parking plans with the parking spaces clearly marked ([see Annex I](#)).

2. Student welfare services

Findings reported by EEC

At the present time the administration staff that support the student welfare services appears to be adequate for the number of students enrolled. The Student Welfare Service is staffed by two Officers and collaborates with two external psychologists. They all have sufficient professional experience and expertise in their field.

As stated, there are around 120 students for the 3 programmes. Since many of the students are working, they are generally not interested or do not have the time to be involved in student clubs or sports activities.

2.1 Special access for students with disabilities:

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

The premises also meet the specifications for easy access for all its students.

2.2 Recreation areas:

The College has a canteen, located on the 1st floor, offering beverages to students. There is also a small coffee shop across the street that offers to students, presenting their student card, snack, food, and beverages at low prices.

Students can also use for free, the sports centre at the Polemidia elementary school that is only a few minutes away. Moreover, the College amphitheatre is available to students for events such as theatre, movies etc.

2.3 Policy and statutes for academic student support:

Due to the small number of students, instructors have direct contact with students offering them immediate academic support. Moreover, if students are facing a problem and do not wish to discuss it with the instructor, they can refer to their Academic Advisor or the student welfare officer.

2.4 Policy and statutes for financial student support:

The College offers full or partial scholarships to candidates with high scores or financial problems. Also, the College offers sports scholarships. Moreover, if students have difficulties in paying off their tuition fees the College will offer them more flexible payment methods.

2.5 Counselling services:

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

2.6 Career office:

The student welfare officer offers the appropriate information to students on any work vacancies and provides essential services in personal guidance and development. The officer guides students how to prepare for a job interview, how to write a personal statement or a CV. The College also collaborates with many hotels for students' internships as well as employment after graduation.

2.7 Service linking the institution with business:

The College has staff members with many years of working experience in the hospitality industry that guide and support the students regarding the practical part in the industry. Moreover, the collaborations the College has with the hotels include planned visits to their premises, recruitment for internship and professional training to their workforce.

2.8 Mobility office:

The College promotes the Erasmus+ for students and staff mobility (both academic and administrative staff). Students can participate in mobility actions to go abroad to continue their studies or for internship. The College received an Erasmus Accreditation Certificate.

2.9 Student clubs/organisations/associations:

The College tries to involve students in various student clubs and social activities such as volunteering. The College also organises events such as blood donations and Orientation Days. The College is willing to support students to create new student clubs or other entertainment events according to their demands. There is also a Student Union that represents students' rights and requirements in different committees.

2.10 Other services:

Visa for foreign Students: the Admission Office guides prospective foreign students in relation with all necessary documents that need to be filled out and the procedures to be followed through the government authorities.

Student Identity Card: the Student Identity Card is issued for all students and offers a number of benefits, for example discounts in shops/restaurants.

Workshops and Events: the College organises workshops at the actual Hotels in order for students to have a real life experience. Also, it organises educational visits and excursions such as to a Winery and Vineyards.

Action/Response

We thank the EEC for its very positive comments and we would like to assure that the college will continue providing satisfactory services to its students and always continue to improve its services taking into consideration the students' evaluation reports and suggestions.

3. Infrastructure

Findings reported by EEC

For the current level of operations, infrastructure suffices. Given the College's intent to grow significantly and to engage more staff/faculty in research activities (leading to a need for quiet research offices), there will be pressure on the infrastructure in the short run.



Action/Response

Even though the college has not enough offices for each staff/faculty member, the owner company of Mesoyios College provides office spaces in another floor where it operates its Vocational Training Center.

1. Institution's Academic Profile and Orientation

Sub-Areas

1.1 Mission and strategic planning

1.2 Connecting with society

1.3 Development processes

Findings reported by EEC

1.1 Mission and strategic planning

Mission and strategic planning are adequate for the moment; nonetheless, Mesoyios College should seriously plan how to manage change in the face of its future expansion plans.

1.2 Connecting with society

The College is commended on the development of a work environment characterised by collegiality, friendliness, and 'family' relations. This is also reflected in relations with alumni, which until now, however, remain rather informal; no proper College alumni body has been set up. This should be prioritised soon. The College is also commended on developing relationships with rural communities in Troodos Mountain in line with its vision to establish a university in the area.

1.3 Development processes

Attracting non-Cypriot students to enrol in the College's programmes has proved a challenge as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and other government decisions. Moreover, attracting Cypriot students in non-accredited programmes is difficult. On these grounds, the College should increase its efforts to attract more students ideally of higher quality to financially sustain its operations but also to improve its academic reputation.

The College was expecting to admit ten (10) students from Cyprus and fifteen (15) students from Greece and other European countries in the academic year 2021-22; yet, it did not manage to attract any students from these countries. This failure was largely attributed to the current extenuating circumstances (arising from the COVID-19 pandemic) but also because Cypriot students are only lured by accredited programmes whereas the College's flagship programme (i.e., BA in Business Administration) is not yet accredited. The COVID-19 pandemic as well as issues arising from policies implemented by the Cypriot government resulted also into a very low number of admissions from third countries. Existing international students largely originate from Asian countries, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal. At present (i.e., academic year 2021-22), 119 students are enrolled in the various College's programmes - only one (1) of them originates from Cyprus. Regarding forecasts and based on its Strategic Plan, the College expects to attract twenty-five (25) students from Cyprus, forty (40) students from Greece and other European countries and thirty (30) international students for the academic year 2022-23; forty (40) students from Cyprus, forty (40) students from Greece and other European countries and thirty (30) international students for the academic year 2023-24; and fifty (50) students from Cyprus, forty (40) students from Greece and other European countries and thirty (30) international students for the academic year 2024-25.

The EEC finds evidence of standard overall compliance with respect to the institution's academic profile and orientation.

Areas of improvement and recommendations reported by EEC

1. The College aspires to substantially expand its operations soon. The EEC commends the College on its initiatives but stresses that the financial sustainability of this strategic move largely depends on the ability of the College to meet its student admissions targets. On these grounds, the College is strongly encouraged to develop a contingency plan in case it does not manage to realise its objectives;
2. The College is also strongly encouraged to institutionalise its relations with alumni by assisting in the setup of a proper Mesoyios College alumni society. Successful alumni can be excellent promoters of the College acting as business coaches and providing job opportunities to students and recent graduates;
3. Finally, the College is encouraged to establish an Advisory Board consisting of eminent academics and practitioners to advise the College on its strategic mission and planning. Members of the Advisory Board should be different and independent from those that participate in the Board of Directors.

Note: The College is currently facing difficulties in attracting non-Cypriot students to enrol in its programmes because of the COVID-19 pandemic and other government decisions. Moreover, attracting Cypriot students in non-accredited programmes is challenging.

Action/Response

1. Mesoyios College as it is, and operates today, as well as its student admission targets, is totally independent from the Education Development Strategic Plan for Troodos. Thus, even if the wider strategic move does not manage to realise its objectives, Mesoyios College won't be affected at all as far as the student admissions is concerned. For this, the BOD of Mesoyios College has developed already its own strategic (contingency) plan and the entire Administration and Management Team of Mesoyios College remains focus on this plan's targets. We herewith attach the Mesoyios College's strategic plan 2021-2024 (without the development plan for Troodos) for your consideration ([see Annex V](#)).

Furthermore, the following actions have already been taken to ensure targeted admissions for Mesoyios College:

- (a) In strategic collaboration with City of Dreams Casino Resort, Four Seasons Hotel, Amathus Beach Hotel, St. Raphael Hotel and other luxury hotels in Limassol, we have introduced an innovative "Study & Work Scholarship" for Cypriots and other European students, for more than 260 academic placements every year.
- (b) We have signed agreements with more than 30 Student Agencies in EU countries, Council of Europe (non-EU) countries and other 3rd countries around the world.
- (c) We have leased our communications, sales and marketing to House of Brands, one of the best marketing companies in Cyprus, to handle the MC branding and admissions in the Cyprus market, in support to MC's Communications, Admission and Marketing Manager.

- (d) We have established a strategic partnership with Troodos Network, which apart from the Education Development of Troodos they started working on the promotion of MC's academic admissions (focusing on "Study & Work Scholarships").
 - (e) A strategic collaboration with the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) is under process and the MoU is expected before the end of February 2022, in which among other actions of collaboration, the KUL will recommend/forward its annual ± 700 -1,200 surplus academic applications (in same or similar programs) to Mesoyios College.
 - (f) We are working on the development of joint degrees with an Indian and two Polish universities, with incoming students from their universities/countries.
2. Taking into consideration the EEC's recommendation, the Internal Quality Committee, in their last meeting on 28/01/2022, decided to proceed with the creation of an Alumni Office aiming to support the graduate students for personal and professional development as well as strengthening the relationship between the College and its graduates. The available information will be uploaded in the College's website (see Annex VI) and the site will be updated regularly including relevant content for our graduate students. Additionally, we will create an Alumni page in the College's Facebook account for more interactive communication and exchange of information with our graduates.
 3. Taking into consideration the EEC's recommendation, Mesoyios College has proceeded with engaging Dr. Katarzyna Wos from University of Marie Curie Skłodowska, Poland, Associate Professor Dr. Grzegorz Grzywaczewski from University of Life Sciences, Poland, Mr. Stelios Christofides, former Senior Education Officer in Higher Education Department of the MOEC of Cyprus (in charge of HEIs and the budgeting of public universities), Mr. Andreas Michaelides (Financial Consultant & Auditor), Mr. Costas Hadjicostis (Legal Advisor & Lawyer) and Mr. Andreas Georgiou (General Manager of Amathus Beach Hotel***** and active member of the Cyprus Hotel Manager Association [ΠΑΣΥΔΙΞΕ] and the Cyprus Tourism Business Association [ΣΤΕΚ]). All six constitute the Advisory Board to advise the College on its strategic mission planning and implementation.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-Areas

2.1 System and quality assurance strategy

2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study

Findings reported by EEC

2.1 System and Quality Assurance Strategy

As also discussed in section 6 of this report, the College has only very modest research activities. To improve the curriculum from both a content and a delivery perspective, academic staff should be better research-informed but ideally also become research-active. The College's quality assurance system should put more emphasis into this issue especially given its aspirations to establish a university.

2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study

The system for assessing student performance is adequate for the current operation. If the College expands to the desired level, however, the system will need to be revised to reflect the workloads this will involve.

The Library has a small collection of books, not all of which appear entirely relevant to the topics taught. However, there is access to reputable literature search and access networks and facility to obtain materials from other Universities where not accessible directly.

The College has well-articulated policies covering quality assurance processes, supported by several Committees. Staff, including administrative staff, are involved in decision-making, and where relevant students are also included in the various Committees. There are clear KPIs for the various areas and increasing expectations over the next 3 years. KPIs cover Management of Quality Assurance and improvement, Learning and Teaching, Student Administration and Support Services, Learning resources, facilities and equipment, faculty and staff development and research.

Students review both courses and the programme and their comments are used in programme improvements. Any unacceptable scores arising from student feedback are explored and resolved.

There is a clear plagiarism policy, ensuring students are aware that this practice is unacceptable and the penalties that will be applied (through to expulsion in extreme cases) and there is also a clear policy for mark appeals, which in discussion was shown to be effective in supporting fairness.

The system for ensuring the appropriateness and fairness of the student marks is currently sufficient, the moderation of marks process lying with the Programme lead. As numbers increase, however, this task may become onerous and could be shared amongst academic staff with knowledge of the discipline being examined. There is currently no external verification of the marks (nor is there a requirement for this), however, this could be a useful adjunct in the future to further evidence the credibility of programmes.

A wide variety of pedagogies were used in teaching and assessment, for instance case studies, presentations, group work, individual work, exams, and external visits. These support the students' understanding both of theory and its application to practice and develop both subject-specific and transferable skills. Generic grade descriptors are available to aid staff in marking and students in understanding what is required at each mark level. A single descriptor covers all years. It would be

beneficial to develop descriptors for each academic year to illustrate how requirements differ as student progress through their studies.

Regulations are easily accessible and clear and cover the complete student life cycle.

Appropriate to the size of the College, administrative mechanisms and student support are spread evenly across a small team.

The EEC finds overall compliance with the standards concerning Quality Assurance.

Areas of improvement and recommendations reported by EEC

1. as the College increases its student numbers, it may need to rethink some of its approaches to quality assurance as the current approaches may put too much pressure on a small number of staff;
2. the plagiarism policy is clear, and penalties are shown, however it may be worth adding clear penalties for repeated offences;
3. it would be helpful to staff and students to develop generic grade descriptors for each year of study to clearly show how requirements change through the years of a programme.

Action/Response

1. At this point we would like to clarify that during the moderation process all academic staff is involved in the procedure and the papers for each course are equally divided to each member.
2. We welcome the EEC's recommendation and we added in our Plagiarism Policy the following paragraph (see Annex VII):

"Repeated plagiarism offences

In case of repeated plagiarism offences, the student will directly be referred to the Disciplinary Committee and the penalty will be failing the course(s) and the student will be under probation for the next semester. If the student continues to violate the Plagiarism Policy, he/she will be dismissed from the college."

3. We thank the EEC for its recommendation to revise our generic grade descriptors for each year of study and thus, we proceeded accordingly (see Annex VIII).

3. Administration

Findings reported by EEC

The administrative staff of the College is characterised by a high level of engagement and efficiency. The College has a dedicated and well-supported administrative staff. These staff are involved in decision-making and have CPD opportunities. The policies governing administration are clear and accessible, and involvement of various stakeholders in decision-making committees ensures transparency. There are clear policies covering disciplinary infringements of both staff and students.

The EEC confirms overall standard compliance with respect to Administration.

Areas of improvement and recommendations reported by EEC

Areas for continuous improvement concern the large number of Committees and it is suggested that the Committee structure is simplified and rationalised.

Action/Response

We agree with EEC's recommendation and since we are currently a college with small number of students and staff, and the fact that in most committees the members are the same, we proceeded with reducing the committees and transfer responsibilities as following:

1. The committees have been reduced from 8 to 5, and the remaining that will run are:
 - Internal Quality Committee
 - Academic Committee
 - Administrative Committee
 - Research Committee
 - Health & Safety Committee
2. The Academic Committee undertook the responsibilities of the Disciplinary Committee.
3. The HR Office undertook the responsibilities of the Faculty Selection Committee in collaboration with the direct Program Coordinators.
4. The Student Affairs Office undertook the responsibilities of the Student Affairs Committee and they refer each case to the relevant committee or authorized college official. Any other kind of support and implementation of activities with the students will be handled directly by the Student Affairs Office since they collect all necessary information of each student using a personality questionnaire (see Annex IX) and organize regular meetings with the students.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-Areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Findings reported by EEC

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

The programmes of study are developed in collaboration with industry and are reviewed annually in relation to student feedback and for their currency. There is a clear ratification system for changes in the programmes. The College is also actively engaged in working with prestigious overseas providers of similar programmes (e.g., Glion and La Roche), which will further enrich the opportunities available to students. Partners in teaching and learning have been carefully selected to support the ambitions of the College and to advance access to contemporary knowledge relevant to the programmes.

As vocational programmes, the students are exposed to both theory and practice, with evidence of many industry-facing events through courses and extra-curricular opportunities. This is entirely appropriate and an important element of such programmes. The College has developed strategic alliances with prestigious hotels in the area to facilitate this. In addition, teaching and learning approaches develop both subject-level knowledge and skills and transferable skills – the latter being highly desirable to employers. Students (as well as all staff) also have opportunities to engage in Erasmus+ activities and this scheme is well-used by the College.

Assessment strategies are constrained by Governmental requirements, but the project element is used to its largest extent (30%), which is appropriate to vocational programmes. It seems that many of the activities under this heading are ‘authentic’ – directly related to industry practice. Currently the main method of instruction is lecture, albeit these are not didactic. Students from different programmes taking the same module will be in the same class (up to legal maxima). As student numbers grow it would be worth considering having a core lecture and then seminars linked to each programme to facilitate discussion and subject-specific activities.

The teaching and learning facilities are very good, and more than adequate for the current intakes. As the College grows, however, there may be pressure on these facilities. Although this may be overcome by teaching classes multiple times, this puts pressure on teaching staff who are also encouraged to undertake research to support the College’s research ambitions.

4.2 Organisation of teaching

The College currently has two admission points in a year (October and February) and as a result classes are taught twice. This is very inefficient and makes extra demands on staff. It is advised that the College adopts a single-entry point in September/October, unless students transfer credits that cover semester 1 courses.

Students value the family atmosphere and their ability to access staff, who they describe as helpful. Three of those seen had come to the College based on recommendations of friendliness. They feel they have many opportunities, including Erasmus+. They find systems supporting them at times of difficulty accessible, helpful, and supportive.

The EEC finds overall compliance with respect to Learning and Teaching.

Areas of improvement and recommendations reported by EEC

1. the College, as it grows, should further formalise admissions requirements and processes;
2. the College as it grows will need to be cognizant of the impacts on both the adequacy of facilities and pressures on staff;
3. the current two-entry point system is inefficient, and it is recommended that there should be a single point of entry to programmes unless the student is transferring credits covering semester 1 courses.

Action/Response

1. Regarding the admission requirements and processes, the College follows: a) the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (topic 1.4 in the ESG 2015 manual – see Annex X and <http://www.mesoyios.ac.cy/admission-requirements>); b) the guidelines and instructions announced by the CYQAA (i.e. English language proficiency levels for undergraduate and postgraduate programs dated 02/07/2020 and 09/09/2020); c) the relevant regulations as approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (see <http://www.mesoyios.ac.cy/admission-requirements>); and c) the decisions of the Council of Ministers (i.e. decisions 89.363 dated 07/05/2020 and 89.688 dated 01/07/2020).
2. Regarding the adequacy of facilities we would like to clarify that the college provides facilities to accommodate 762 students (2 shifts) and 30 administrative and faculty staff (see Annex XI), including the office spaces offered by the owner company in another floor.
Regrading the expansion of the College, there is a provision for human resources increase as well as to find additional building with the necessary facilities for students and staff (administrative and academic) according to the Regulations of 1990 (Κ.Λ.Π. 54/90) for the Private Institutions of Tertiary Education (Facilities and Equipment).
3. We agree with the EEC's comment about the insufficiency of the two-entry point system (offering the modules of Semester 1 twice every year) resulting in extra demands and pressure on staff. Thus, we will make sure, through the course distribution per semester (see Annex XII), that students who start their studies in February will take modules of Semester 2 without any pre-requisites from modules of Semester 1, and in September they will take the modules of Semester 1. Therefore, the modules of Semester 1 and Semester 2 will be offered once every year. This would free up time for the staff to perform less under pressure and more effectively and free up time to be involved with research as well.

5. Teaching Staff

Findings reported by EEC

The College has a strong and committed academic staff with qualifications appropriate to the levels of study. If the College adds Masters' level provision, the staff composition will need to reflect the need for more PhD-qualified individuals. This may prove difficult, but the College is supporting internal staff to obtain PhDs, which in the short-term should satisfy requirements. The staff also includes individuals with extensive professional experience in the areas of study, adding very positively to the student experience and the ability of students to understand how theory relates to practice.

Out of the seventeen (17) members of academic staff currently working in the College (note: potential number of members of staff is 23 according to the documentation provided), 11 work as full-timers and six (6) as part-timers. Moreover, all members of staff are at the level of Lecturer. The College is encouraged to further increase its full-time members of staff as soon as the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic recedes and to provide opportunities for staff progression to the level of Assistant, Associate and eventually Full Professor. This is essential given the aspirations of the College to establish a university by 2024.

In discussion, staff value opportunities to give feedback, to engage in CPD and to engage in research. They enjoy the multicultural and supportive environment, describing as being like a family. They enjoy the personal association with students and the effective management of the College. They also value the flexibility offered by the College and opportunities to study for further qualifications. They can also attend conferences to present their research and develop professional networks, which will be important as the College move towards University status.

The current, and proposed future, staff: student ratio is consistent with a teaching institution. It will, however, not enable staff to spend time on research activities to any significant degree. If the College is serious in its ambition to develop a research agenda, this will need to be addressed. Similarly, as mentioned above, 2 points of entry for students increases the time staff spend teaching students and reduces their ability to develop their research activities.

Note: The EEC decided to provide a n/a rating to items 5.4 and 5.5 as there are no members of special teaching staff in the College. Moreover, and although the College does not have institutional arrangements for Visiting Professors, there is sufficient evidence of external academics visiting the College to deliver lectures and participate activities also in the context of the Erasmus+ programme. The College is also commended on providing accommodation facilities to these visiting staff. On these grounds, the EEC decided to provide a rating of 5 in items related to Visiting Professors.

The EEC confirms overall compliance with the standards related to teaching staff.

Areas of improvement and recommendations reported by EEC

1. ensuring the staffing levels enable academic staff to engage in the College's research ambitions;
2. ensuring that the operation of the programme does not introduce additional teaching burdens on staff;
3. a further increase of the number of full-time members of staff as soon as the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic recedes;

4. providing opportunities for staff progression to the level of Assistant, Associate and eventually Full Professor.

Action/Response

1. We would like to inform you that the college every year encourages and supports lecturers to enrol into PhD programmes. Also, based on previous EEC's recommendation to advertise our academic positions and have the chance to find more academic staff with PhD, we already proceeded with creating an account and advertising our available teaching positions in www.jobs.ac.uk and www.akadeus.com (see Annex XIII). Additionally, we created an account to for job advertisements in www.academicjobseu.com (see Annex XIV) and in the EURES Network through the Cyprus Department of Labor - Cyprus Public Employment Service, as well as on its website (link: <http://www.mesoyios.ac.cy/careers>). Additionally, the College has already a budget for incentives to faculty members for research activities and publications as well as for various research expenses (i.e. participation in conferences, memberships in professional bodies, etc.).
2. Regarding the operation of the programs of study, the College always prepares proactively recruitment plans for every semester so as to avoid any overload for faculty as well as administrative staff. Additionally, based on the College's "Staff and Faculty Development Policy", the faculty members are entitled to teaching hours reduction for professional development as well as for research activities.
3. Following the EEC's recommendation to increase the number of full-time members, we would like to clarify that, due to the fact that the continuous improvement and upgrade of the quality of the programs of study, as well as our services, is a main part of our strategic plan, the recruitment of qualified permanent staff is in our immediate priorities. Therefore, with the increase of admissions, we will proceed immediately with the recruitment plans accordingly.
4. The College has already in place the "Academic Staff Promotion Policy and Procedure" giving the opportunity to faculty members for ranking promotion as well as for supervisory and management positions (see Annex XV).

6. Research

Findings reported by EEC

Based on the content of the module outlines as well as on the outcome of the discussion with members of academic staff, the EEC believes that most academics in the College are research-informed regarding developments in their field. Nonetheless, the College's faculty managed to produce only one (1) research publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal in 2021 - this was in line with the College's strategic plan, but it is still regarded as a very modest target. Out of its seventeen (17) members of academic staff currently working (note: potential number of members of staff is 23 according to the documentation provided), the College has two (2) PhD holders and five (5) PhD candidates - the remaining academics hold only Masters' degrees. Very few people in the College have solid research aspirations. Based on the above and given its profile and vocational roots, the College is currently not able to encourage research collaboration within and outside the Institution or to participate in collaborative research funding programmes and/or to attract external, non-governmental funding. Likewise, and given that the research output is so limited, there is no point in the College investigating issues such as an open access policy for publications in the current stage. This, and the nascent stage of research activity in the College, explains the EEC's decision to provide a n/a rating in 6.4, 6.6 and 6.9.

Although the EEC finds (only) partial compliance (as is) with respect to the research standards, the EEC believes that most academics in the College are research-informed regarding developments in their field but not all are yet research-active. This is a serious point of concern, given the aspirations of the College to substantially increase its research output in the following years, i.e., from one (1) research publication in 2021, to two (2) in 2022; four (4) in 2023 and six (6) in 2024. In other words, the College should increase its efforts not only to instigate a research culture among its members of academic staff but also to emphasize the need for proper research output. The College must also ensure that staff have sufficient time available to engage in meaningful research activities. The projected establishment of a research centre may help in this direction.

Areas of improvement and recommendations reported by EEC

1. the very limited research outputs of the College at present: members of academic staff are strongly advised to become research output-oriented. This should also help them better inform their curriculum;
2. the College should also rationalize the delivery of its programmes as the current practice to deliver all modules twice per academic year results in a loss of scale economies and denies valuable time from academic staff that can be invested towards reading for a PhD degree and/or producing solid, peer-reviewed research outputs and/or participating in bids for external funding. The projected scaling-up of operations may consume additional staff resources to the detriment of research undertakings; therefore, the College should develop a plan to deal with this important challenge.

Action/Response

1. We welcome the EEC's recommendation and thus, the College will proceed with the following actions aiming to increase the research activities by the faculty members:

- Motivate the faculty members to spare obligatory hours for research activities with extra remuneration schemes.
- Include in the employment agreement a paragraph for research activities as part of the faculty member's obligation during employment at Mesoyios College.
- The Research Committee will organize additional training and workshops to the faculty members to develop knowledge and skills for producing research papers.
- The Research Committee will increase its efforts to provide guidance and support to faculty members for implementation of research activities.

Additionally, as mentioned in our previous answer, the College has already a budget for incentives to faculty members for research activities and publications as well as for various research expenses (i.e. participation in conferences, memberships in professional bodies, etc.).

2. We agree with EEC's recommendation and thus, we will proceed with the following actions to deal with projected increase of operations:
 - We will make sure that the modules of Semester 1 and Semester 2 will be offered once every year. This would free up time for the staff to perform less under pressure and more effectively and free up time to be involved with research as well (see our previous answer above for more details).
 - As mentioned in our previous answer earlier, the College always prepares proactively recruitment plans for every semester so as to avoid any overload for faculty as well as administrative staff. Additionally, based on the College's "Staff and Faculty Development Policy", the faculty members are entitled to teaching hours reduction for professional development as well as for research activities.

7. Resources

Findings reported by EEC

The College seems to be well-managed from a financial point of view. Processes are transparent and risks are appropriately assessed.

Overall, the College is characterised by a solid financial position and the ability to sustainably support its operations. Having said that, it should be noted that the College has suffered because of a small student intake in the last couple of years mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Cypriot government's decision to erect significant barriers to international student admissions. Nonetheless, the College's senior management seems confident that this is only a temporary problem, which will be effectively addressed in the following years based on the College's strategic plan to expand operations and scale at a significant level.

The EEC confirms standard compliance with respect to resources (for the current state and level of operations).

Areas of improvement and recommendations reported by EEC

Expansion of operations may certainly help the College achieve unit cost savings and enhance its revenue streams; nonetheless, it also bears several significant financial risks if the targets set in its Strategic Plan are not met. Hence, the College is strongly advised to develop a contingency plan and also to seek additional sources of revenue (i.e., other than tuition fees) for example from the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund. The College can also work closely with local industrial stakeholders to develop sponsorship and scholarship programmes.

Action/Response

Mesoyios College has already developed a contingency plan, which is already under implementation with the following actions taken or/and are under process:

1. On 07/09/2021 we submitted an Erasmus+ proposal with the following details:
 - a. Call: ERASMUS-EDU-2021-PEX-COVE
 - b. Type of Action: ERASMUS-LS
 - c. Proposal number: 101056397
 - d. Proposal acronym: IDCCThe project is of a €3,489,166 budget and we are expecting the results of the evaluation on 9th March 2022.
2. We are preparing a proposal for a RESTART 2016–2020 under the name SEED 1221 of a €500,000 budget to be submitted on 18th February 2022.
3. We are preparing for participation as partners in a Polish Project (by ECCC Foundation) under the Ministry of Education of Poland, for the launching, organization and implementation of European Computer Competence Certificate System (ECCC) in Cyprus.
4. We are constantly in search of European Regional Development Funds, European Social Funds, Horizon and other EU & National Funds to support both our Strategic Plans (Mesoyios College and Education Development of Troodos).

Additionally, we would like to clarify that the owner company of Mesoyios College (MC Mesoyios College Ltd) have never applied/used any loan or overdraft facilities from any financial institution.



Therefore, the company saves this opportunity for a loan and/or overdraft facility within its contingency plan in case it will be required.

B. Conclusions and Final Remarks

Constructive conclusions and final remarks reported by EEC

The EEC confirms the evidence of an overall standard of compliance (or partial compliance in a limited number of areas, see above) at current levels of faculty and students.

The EEC specifically commends the College:

1. for having a direct impact on the local/regional economy (also referring to the Troodos program);
2. for its close connections to the business world and to HE partners in Europe and Asia (India);
3. for its efforts to actively and effectively help students to find jobs (direct career services) beyond the support it offers its students throughout the whole learning experience (work-study support);
4. for its highly appreciated “family” approach and direct, personal connections between staff, faculty, and students.

The EEC discussed the following points of improvement and/or concern with the College’s leadership:

1. Mesoyios College’s growth strategy (both in terms of number of students (per programme) and number of programmes to be offered) and in terms of institutional transformation (creating a university);
2. The role of (active, practice-focused) research activities and experiential (practical) learning in the context of a further formalisation of the “blended” learning pedagogies and assessment methodologies;
3. Mesoyios College is also recommended to increase the number of homeland students to balance the (relatively) high proportion of international students;
4. The development of a clear strategy that will effectively enable the College to attract and compensate (international) faculty (competitive, cost-of-living adjusted wages) with the necessary qualifications for high quality delivery of such programmes and research (time & output).

Final remarks by Mesoyios College

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the EEC’s time and constructive feedback in the evaluation of our institution. With a persistence for academic success and excellence, we are taking full consideration of the EEC’s invaluable suggestions so as to continue improving and innovating our services in our student-centered learning environment.

Taking into consideration the EEC’s recommendations for improvement, we would like to point out the following:

1. We believe that we have already created a highly meticulous Development Strategic Plan and a contingency plan in case it does not manage to realise its objectives.

2. The College aims to take into serious consideration the EEC's recommendation by taking the following actions:
 - a. Organization of more interactive workshops.
 - b. Integration of case studies simulating practical case scenarios.
 - c. Incorporate active learning classroom experiences to actively engage students in discussions about course content.
3. New marketing strategies have been adopted and applied to increase the number of homeland students providing with further incentives and academic opportunities (see Annex V – Marketing Plan).
4. The College will increase its attention to Affirmative Actions for staff recruitment and development. More specifically:
 - a. The College aims to recruit qualified international faculty staff through participation in European Job Fairs, providing them with further remuneration incentives that are included in its budget, as well as through faculty exchange programs with collaborated HEIs.
 - b. The college will motivate and offer to the faculty staff further professional development opportunities with funding support either via the companies' budget for staff/faculty development or Erasmus+. Additionally, the College already supports its faculty staff with Sabbatical Leave further studies and professional development, and will grant further periods of leave, based on certain rules and procedures, ensuring work-life-balance.

Finally, we believe that we already provide competitive employment packages in accordance with the current trends of the educational market in Cyprus.

D. Higher Education Institution Academic Representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Theodoros Antoniou	President of the Council	<input type="text"/>
Theofilos Antoniou	Principal	<input type="text"/>
Michalis Socratous	Business Administration Program Coordinator	<input type="text"/>
Akis Ioannides	HR & Quality Assurance Manager	<input type="text"/>
Georgia Mouzoura	Internal Quality Committee Member	<input type="text"/>
Elena Karafotia	Registrar	<input type="text"/>

Date: 11/02/2022

