

Doc. 300.2.1

External Evaluation Report (Institutional)

Date: January 21st 2022

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Mesoyios College
- **Town:** Limassol
- **Institution Status:** Registered but not evaluated-
accredited

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. Introduction

Agenda:

The site visit took place according to the following schedule of meetings:

- A brief introduction of the members of the External Evaluation Committee
- A meeting with the Head of the Institution– short presentation of the Institution, mission and strategic planning, connecting with the society, development processes
- A meeting with the members of the Internal Evaluation Committee- system and quality assurance strategy, ensuring quality for the programmes of study (QA session)
- A meeting with the Head of the relevant department and the programme(s) Coordinator(s).
with short presentations of the School's structure, the feasibility study of the programme(s), the curriculum (i.e. philosophy, the programme's standards, allocation of courses per semester, weekly content of each course, the learning outcomes and ECTS, teaching methodologies, admission criteria for prospective students, student assessment, final exams, the people involved in the programme's design and development) and the methodology and equipment used in teaching and learning (i.e. software, hardware, materials, online platforms, teaching material, evaluation methods, projects, samples of written examinations / thesis).
- A meeting only with members of the teaching staff on each course of the programme for all the years of study (QA session) discussing the CVs (i.e. academic qualifications, publications, research interests, research activity, compliance with Staff ESG), on any other duties in the institution and teaching obligations in other programmes, the content of each course and its implementation (i.e., methodologies, selected bibliography, students' workload, compliance with Teaching ESG), the learning outcomes, the content and the assessment of each course and their compliance with the level of the programme according to the EQF and the assessment criteria, samples of final exams or other teaching material and resources.
- A meeting with members of the administrative staff.
- A meeting with students (4 students, 3 (overseas students) from the unaccredited Business Administration programme, one (Cypriot student) taking the HM Diploma)
- A meeting with the Head of the Institution, the Head of the relevant department and the programme's Coordinator- exit discussion (questions, clarifications).

During the site visit, the EEC visited the library, teaching rooms, break-out rooms, classes and the computer laboratories of the programme/study under evaluation and was able to look at a (pre-recorded (live) lecture.

The EEC confirms staff were available during the whole day of the site visit for queries and the institution provided very short presentations in the sessions needed, so that adequate time remained for questions by the EEC members and productive discussion.

General remarks

The EEC made it clear from the start of the visit that the purpose was not only confirmation of compliance with the required standards, but also to help the institution to further improve the program (content and delivery). The discussions that took place were hence in line with a "peer

review”, i.e. very open, future-focused and in a broader context than just the standards. The context the EEC deemed relevant for this evaluation was characterised by the (general) challenges of higher education. Some trends and evolutions in the world of HE have been accelerated by the pandemic (e.g. online delivery, hybrid learning, ...) and issues regarding globalisation and internationalisation, knowledge transfer and knowledge creation, impact of education and research, employability, ... were equally discussed to better frame the importance of the standards and of continuous improvement.

In general, the EEC found clear evidence of standard compliance, but more importantly, the EEC was impressed by the dynamic, young, highly motivated and qualified faculty and the close relationships (personal touch and individual attention) between staff/faculty and students at Mesoyios. This is, of course, due to the small number of students in the program, but it is also well “embedded” in the institution’s approach to HE, thereby establishing a competitive advantage and distinctive mission and vision.

The EEC commends Mesoyios College for having a direct impact on the local/regional economy (also referring to the Troodos program) and the support the College offers to business development by providing well-trained students in high demand on the “market”. The College has close connections to the business world and to HE partners in Europe (Poland, Slovakia, Switzerland) and in India and actively and effectively helps students to find jobs (direct career services) beyond the support it offers its students throughout the whole learning experience (work-study support). The EEC - and the Mesoyios College students - highly appreciate the “family” approach and connections between staff, faculty and students: the College can be proud of the enthusiasm and the engagement of faculty and administrative staff.

Points of discussion and areas for further improvement:

1. Mesoyios College’s growth strategy (both in terms of number of students (per programme) and number, level and mode of delivery of programmes to be offered) and in terms of creating a university, call for a serious and not to be underestimated strategic planning, execution and change management endeavour. The EEC recommends the College safeguards existing operations at existing quality levels during that transformation and ensures current operations will not suffer from the strain on time, human, financial and infrastructure resources that such a transformation will undoubtedly entail;
2. The role of (active, practice-focused) research activities and experiential (practical) learning in the context of “blended” learning pedagogies: The College is recommended to further extend and continue to integrate the kind of research activities aligned with the mission and vision and to ensure faculty and staff have the necessary time and financial resources to successfully do so. Leveraging the (international) academic and business networks the College has built is a sensible strategy to do so, certainly when the College is set to scale-up its operations and research time will become more crucial to achieve success;
3. Mesoyios is also recommended to increase the number of homeland students to balance the (relatively) high portion of international students (Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Moldavia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Russia). The Troodos initiative is proof of the College’s intent to do so as this initiative (in cooperation with the Cyprus Government and with EU support) is focused on stimulating development in the more rural areas of the country;

4. The development of a clear strategy for (young) faculty to obtain a PhD is commendable. The recruitment of PhD holding faculty will become necessary when the College starts master-level programmes. Being able 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) will be key to success (reputation & attractiveness) in the College's future.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Prof. Dr. Philip Vergauwen, Chair	Professor Management Accounting & Control, Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management	Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium
Prof. Dr. Anita Eves	Professor of Hospitality Management, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Faculty of Social and Social Sciences	University of Surrey, United Kingdom
Prof. Dr. Andreas Papatheodorou	Professor of Industrial and Spatial Economics with emphasis on Tourism, School of Business, Department of Business Administration	University of Aegean, Greece
Mrs. Katerina Evangelou	Academic Affairs & Student Welfare	University of Cyprus, Cyprus
Mr. (Eng.) Alexis Valiantis	General Manager	A.F. Modinos & S.A. Vrahimis Chartered Architects & Engineers, Cyprus
Mr. Georgios Aristotelous	Student member	Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus

C. Building Facilities - Student Welfare Services - Infrastructure

1. Building facilities

1.1 Plans and licenses

Choose Yes or No depending on the existence of the following documents.

1. Building facilities			Yes / No
1.1 Plans and licenses			Yes / No
1.1.1	The following should be copies from the original building permit. On the copies, there should be a visible official stamp of approval from the respective authorities.		
	1.1.1.1	A topographical plan, which displays in a clear manner the extent of the development.	Yes
	1.1.1.2	A general site plan, which marks the building facilities, allocated parking spaces (for students, academic and teaching personnel, visitors and disabled individuals), sports premises and outdoor areas.	Yes
1.1.2	An operating license issued by the Local Authorities		No
1.1.3	The following operating license certificates, duly completed:		
	1.1.3.1	Visual Inspection Form E.O.E. 102	Yes
	1.1.3.2	Visual Inspection for the Building's Seismic Sufficiency Form E.O.E.Σ.E.K 103	Yes
	1.1.3.3	Inspection Certificate Form 104	Yes
1.1.3.4	Fire Safety Certificate, issued by the Fire Department		Yes

	1.1.3.5	Certificate for Adequate Electrical and Mechanical Installations, issued by the Electromechanical Department	Yes
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Justify the answers provided for the building facilities by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

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.

Other Facilities

1. Building Facilities		
1.2 Other Facilities		Satisfactory - Poor - Unsatisfactory
1.2.1	Number of teaching rooms and their respective areas, capacity and the percentage of daily occupancy for all units	Satisfactory
1.2.2	Number of offices for teaching staff and their respective areas and capacity	Satisfactory
1.2.3	Number of laboratories and their respective areas and capacity	Satisfactory
1.2.4	Number of rooms/offices for directors/administrators and their respective areas and capacity	Satisfactory

1.2.5	Number of rooms/offices for administrative services and their respective areas and capacity	Satisfactory
1.2.6	Number of parking spaces designated for students	Poor
1.2.7	Number of parking spaces designated for teaching staff	Poor
1.2.8	Number of parking spaces designated for people with disabilities	Satisfactory

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.

2. Student Welfare Services

2. Student Welfare Services		Satisfactory - Poor - Unsatisfactory
2.1	Special access for students with disabilities (PWD)	satisfactory
2.2	Recreation areas	satisfactory
2.3	Policy and statutes for academic student support	satisfactory
2.4	Policy and statutes for financial student support	satisfactory
2.5	Counselling services	satisfactory
2.6	Career office	satisfactory
2.7	Service linking the institution with business	satisfactory
2.8	Mobility office	satisfactory
2.9	Student clubs/organisations/associations	satisfactory
2.10	Other services	satisfactory

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:

FVisa 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.

3. Infrastructure

Choose Satisfactory or Poor or Unsatisfactory depending on the level of compliance of each statement.

3. Infrastructure		Satisfactory - Poor - Unsatisfactory
3.1	Library	satisfactory
3.2	Computers available for use by the students	satisfactory
3.3	Technological support	satisfactory
3.4	Technical support	satisfactory

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.

D. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

1. Institution's Academic Profile and Orientation

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

1.1 Mission and strategic planning

1.2 Connecting with society

1.3 Development processes

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3: Partially compliant

4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		
1. Institution's academic profile and orientation		
1.1 Mission and strategic planning		1 - 5
1.1.1	The Institution has formally adopted a mission statement, which is available to the public and easily accessible.	5
1.1.2	The Institution has developed its strategic planning aiming at fulfilling its mission.	4
1.1.3	The Institution's strategic planning includes short, medium-term and long-term goals and objectives, which are periodically revised and adapted.	5
1.1.4	The offered programmes of study align with the aims and objectives of the Institution's development.	5
1.1.5	The academic community is involved in shaping and monitoring the implementation of the Institution's development strategies.	5
1.1.6	In the Institution's development strategy, interested parties such as academics, students, graduates and other professional and scientific associations participate in the Institution's development strategy.	5
1.1.7	The mechanism for collecting and analysing data and indicators needed to effectively design the Institution's academic development is adequate and effective.	4
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		1 - 5
1.2.1	The Institution has effective mechanisms to assess the needs and demands of society and takes them into account in its various activities.	5
1.2.2	The Institution provides sufficient information to the public about its activities and offered programmes of study.	5
1.2.3	The Institution ensures that its operation and activities have a positive impact on society.	5
1.2.4	The Institution has an effective communication mechanism with its graduates.	3

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		1 - 5
1.3.1	Effective procedures and measures are in place to attract and select teaching staff to ensure that they possess the formal and substantive skills to teach research and effectively carry out their work.	4
1.3.2	The Institution has a two-year growth budget that is consistent with its strategic planning.	5
1.3.3	Planning academic staff recruitment and their professional development is in line with the Institution's academic development plan.	5
1.3.4	The Institution applies an effective strategy of attracting students/ high-level students from Cyprus.	4
1.3.5	The Institution applies an effective strategy to attract high-level students from abroad.	4
1.3.6	The funding processes for the operation of the Institution and the continuous improvement of the quality of its programmes of study are adequate and transparent.	5

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.

Findings

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

Strengths

The EEC commends the College with respect to:

1. the College having a clear mission and strategic planning at present although this may be challenged should it decide to go ahead with its expansion plans. This ambitious expansion plan entails a significant scaling-up of operations bringing with it serious challenges that should be carefully considered. Among others, the College should consider the possible implications of a continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the efficacy of its current practice regarding relying on educational agencies to attract international students;
2. the College's work environment, characterised by collegiality, friendliness, and 'family' relations among its members of staff. This is also reflected in relations with alumni, which until now, however, remain informal with no proper tracking of post-study professional developments;
3. the College's strongly developed relationships with rural communities in Troodos Mountain in line with its vision to establish a university in the area.
4. The EEC would further like to commend the College on developing strong links with Limassol-based companies as well as with the local society to the benefit of the business ecosystem and regional development. This also relates to the vision of the College regarding the establishment of Olympos University of Troodos in 2024. A senior member of the College is also a member of the European Rural Parliament (<https://europeanruralparliament.com/>)

representing the rural areas of Cyprus. This is a noteworthy achievement beyond the individual level as it can help the College to improve its relationship with local stakeholders.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC suggests that the College focusses on the following areas of potential improvement:

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.*

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

Sub-Area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
1.1 Mission and strategic planning	Compliant
1.2 Connecting with society	Compliant
1.3 Development processes	Compliant

2. Quality Assurance

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8)

Sub-areas

2.1 System and Quality Assurance Strategy

2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3: Partially compliant

4 or 5: Compliant

Quality Indicators/Criteria		
2. Quality Assurance		
2.1 System and Quality Assurance Strategy		1 - 5
2.1.1	The Institution has a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of its strategic management.	4
2.1.2	Internal stakeholders develop and implement a policy for quality assurance through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.	5
2.1.3	The Institution's policy for quality assurance supports guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against students or staff.	5
2.1.4	The quality assurance system adequately covers all the functions and sectors of the Institution's activities:	
2.1.4.1	The teaching and learning	5
2.1.4.2	Research	3
2.1.4.3	The connection with society	5
2.1.4.4	Management and support services	5
2.1.5	The quality assurance system promotes a culture of quality.	5

2.1.6	The Institution consistently applies pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of student 'life cycle', e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.	5
2.1.7	Institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, cooperation with other institutions and quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre.	5
2.1.8	Graduates receive documentation explaining the qualification gained.	5

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. Quality assurance

2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study		1 - 5
2.2.1	The responsibility for decision-making and monitoring the implementation of the programmes of study offered by the Institution lies with the teaching staff.	5
2.2.2	The system and criteria for assessing students' performance in the subjects of the programmes of studies offered by the Institution are clear, sufficient and known to the students.	4
2.2.3	The quality control system refers to specific indicators and is effective.	5
2.2.4	The results from student assessments are used to improve the programmes of study.	5
2.2.5	The policy dealing with plagiarism committed by students as well as mechanisms for identifying and preventing it are effective.	5
2.2.6	The institutionalised procedures for examining students' objections/disagreements on issues of student evaluation or academic ethics are effective.	5
2.2.7	The Institution provides information about its activities, including the programmes of study it offers and the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to the students as well as graduate employment information.	5
2.2.8	The Institution ensures that effective methodology is applied in the learning process.	5

2.2.9	The Institution systematically collects data in relation to the academic performance of students, implements procedures for evaluating such data and has a relevant policy in place.	5
2.2.10	The Institution ensures adequate and appropriate learning resources in line with European and international standards and / or international practices, particularly:	
2.2.10.1	Building facilities	5
2.2.10.2	Library	4
2.2.10.3	Rooms for theoretical, practical and laboratory lessons	5
2.2.10.4	Technological infrastructure	5
2.2.10.5	Support structures for students with special needs and learning difficulties	5
2.2.10.6	Academic Support	5
2.2.10.7	Student Welfare Services	5

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.

Findings

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

Strengths

The EEC commends Mesoyios College for:

1. the involvement off administrative staff and students in decision-making, as well as senior management and academic staff;
2. the (currently) robust system of ensuring the appropriateness and fairness of student outcomes and the clear policies and approaches to ensuring quality (use of generic grade descriptors).
3. including a wide range of pedagogies in both teaching and assessment

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC suggest the College elaborates on and executes the following measures for further improvement:

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.

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

Sub-Area	<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1 System and quality assurance strategy	Compliant
2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study	Compliant

3. Administration (ESG 1.1)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant
3: Partially compliant
4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		
3. Administration		1 - 5
3.1	The administrative structure is in line with the legislation in force and the Institution's declared mission.	5
3.2	The members of the teaching and administrative staff and the students participate, at a satisfactory degree and on the basis of based on specified procedures, in the management of the Institution.	5
3.3	Adequate allocation of competences and responsibilities is ensured so that in academic matters, decisions are made by academics and the Institution's Council competently exercises legal control over such decisions.	5
3.4	The Institution applies effective procedures to ensure transparency in the decision-making process.	5
3.5	The Boards of Departments and Schools, as well as the institutionalised committees of the Institution, operate systematically and exercise fully the responsibilities provided by legislation and / or the constitution and / or the internal regulations of the Institution.	5
3.6	The Council, the Senate as well as the administrative and academic committees, operate systematically and autonomously and exercise the full powers provided for by the statute and / or the constitution of the Institution without the intervention or involvement of a body or person outside the law provisions.	5
3.6	The manner in which the Council, the Senate and/or and the administrative and academic committees operate and the procedures for disseminating and implementing their decisions are clearly formulated and implemented precisely and effectively.	5
3.7	The Institution applies procedures for the prevention and disciplinary control of academic misconduct of students, academic and administrative staff, including plagiarism.	5
3.8	The administrative structure is in line with the legislation in force and the Institution's declared mission.	5

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.

Findings

The EEC confirms overall standard compliance with respect to Administration.

Strengths

The EEC commends the College with respect to:

1. clear and accessible policies;
2. the involvement of academic and administrative staff, and students, in decision-making committees

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

Please select what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment Area	<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
3. Administration	Compliant

4. Learning and Teaching

(ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)

Sub-Areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant
3: Partially compliant
4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		
4. Learning and Teaching		
4.1 Planning the programmes of study		1 - 5
4.1.1	The Institution provides an effective system for designing, approving, monitoring and periodically reviewing programmes of study.	5
4.1.2	Students and other stakeholders, including employers, are actively involved on the programmes' review and development.	5
4.1.3	The programmes of study are in compliance with the ESG and the existing legislation and meet the professional qualifications requirements in the professional courses, where applicable.	5
4.1.4	The Institution ensures that its programmes of study integrate effectively theory and practice.	5
4.1.5	The assessment and evaluation procedures and content are in compliance with the level of the programme of study (in reference to EQF).	5

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		1 - 5
4.2.1	The Institution establishes student admission criteria for each programme, which are adhered to consistently.	4
4.2.2	Recognition of prior studies and credit transfer is regulated by procedures and regulations that are in line with European standards and/or international practices.	5
4.2.3	The number of students in the teaching rooms is suitable for theoretical, practical and laboratory lessons.	5
4.2.4	The teaching staff of the Institution have regular and effective communication with their students.	5
4.2.5	The teaching staff of the Institution provides timely and effective feedback to their students.	5

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.

Findings

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

Strengths

The EEC commends the College with respect to the following strengths:

1. the College's strategic alliances with other institutions – academic and professional;
2. the wide variety of teaching and assessment strategies developing both subject-specific knowledge and skills and transferable skills;
3. its engagement with Erasmus+ to the benefit of staff and students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas for further development and improvement concern:

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.

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

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4.1 Planning the programmes of study	Compliant
4.2 Organisation of teaching	Compliant

5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant
3: Partially compliant
4 or 5: Compliant

Quality Indicators/Criteria		
5. Teaching Staff		1 - 5
5.1	The number of teaching staff - full-time and exclusive work - and the subject area of the staff sufficiently support the programmes of study.	4
5.2	The teaching staff of the Institution have the relevant formal and substantive qualifications for teaching the individual subjects as described in the relevant legislation.	4
5.3	The Visiting Professors' subject areas adequately support the Institution's programmes of study.	5
5.4	The special teaching staff and special scientists have the required qualifications, sufficient professional experience and expertise to teach a limited number of programmes of study.	n/a
5.5	The ratio of special teaching staff to the total number of teaching staff is satisfactory.	n/a
5.6	The ratio of the number of subjects of the programme of study taught by teaching staff working fulltime and exclusively to the number of subjects taught by part-time teaching staff ensures the quality of the programme of study.	5
5.7	The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff is sufficient to support and ensure the quality of the Programme of Study.	4
5.8	The number of teaching staff - full-time and exclusive work - and the subject area of the staff sufficiently support the programmes of study.	4
5.9	The visiting Professors' subject areas adequately support the Institution's programmes of study.	5

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.*

Findings

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

Strengths

The EEC identified the following strengths for Mesoyios College:

1. the academic staff is sufficiently qualified and includes individuals with extensive professional experience;
2. the College is commended on financing internal PhD candidates;
3. the College is commended on its exposure to and development of connections with universities and hotel schools in Switzerland, Poland and Slovenia to the benefit of both its students and staff;

4. the College actively participates in the Erasmus+ programme and encourages student and staff mobility and exchange in this context.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Continuous improvement and further development areas for the College concern:

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.

Please select what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment Area	<i>Non-Compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
5. Teaching staff	Compliant

6. Research

(ESG 1.1, 1.5, 1.6)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant
3: Partially compliant
4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		
6. Research		1 - 5
6.1	The Institution has a research policy formulated in line with its mission.	4
6.2	The Institution consistently applies internal regulations and procedures of research activity, which promote the set-out research policy and ensure compliance with the regulations of research projects financing programmes.	5
6.3	The Institution provides adequate facilities and equipment to cover the staff and students' research activities.	4
6.4	Through its policy and practices, the Institution encourages research collaboration within and outside the Institution, as well as participation in collaborative research funding programmes.	n/a
6.5	The Institution uses a policy for the protection and exploitation of intellectual property, which is applied consistently.	5
6.6	The results of the teaching staff research activity are published to a satisfactory extent in international journals which work with critics, international conferences, conference proceedings, publications, etc. The Institution also uses an open access policy for publications, which is consistent with the corresponding national and European policy.	n/a
6.7	The Institution ensures that research results are integrated into teaching and, to the extent applicable, promotes and implements a policy of transferring know-how to society and the production sector.	5
6.8	The Institution provides mechanisms which ensure compliance with international rules of research ethics, both in relation to research activity and the rights of researchers.	5
6.9	The external, non-governmental, funding of research activities of academic staff is similar to other Institutions in Cyprus and abroad.	n/a
6.10	The policy, indirect or direct of internal funding of the research activities of the academic staff is satisfactory, based on European and international practices.	5

6.11	The programmes of study implement the Institution's recorded research policy.	5
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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.

Findings

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.

Strengths

Areas of strength:

1. based on the discussions with members of academic staff, the EEC understands that there is a strong sense of collegiality within the College to the benefit of the work environment. Members of academic staff seem to capitalise on this collegiality to produce synergies at various levels while an informal programme of academic research mentoring seems to be in place;
2. the College is also commended on acknowledging staff needs for research time but also for its plans to establish a research centre.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC expresses the following concerns with respect to improvements and development:

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.

Please select what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment Area	<i>Non-Compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
6. Research	Partially Compliant

7. Resources (ESG 1.6)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant
3: Partially compliant
4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		
7. Resources		1 - 5
7.1	The institution has sufficient financial resources to support its functions, managed by the Council/Senate.	5
7.2	The Institution follows sound and efficient management of the available financial resources in order to develop academically and research wise.	5
7.3	The Institution's profits and donations are used for its development and for the benefit of the university community.	5
7.4	The Institution's budget is appropriate for its mission and adequate for the implementation of strategic planning.	5
7.5	The Institution carries out an assessment of the risks and sustainability of the programmes of study and adequately provides feedback on their operation.	5
7.6	The Institution's external audit and the transparent management of its finances are ensured.	5
7.7	The fitness-for-purpose of support facilities and services is periodically reviewed.	5

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.

Findings

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

Strengths

The EEC would like to commend the College on seeking certification of its processes based on ISO standards. In particular, the College has already been certified according to ISO 9001 for its quality management system and is also in the process of being additionally certified according to ISO 14001 (environmental management).

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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.

Please select what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment Area	<i>Non-Compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
7. Resources	Compliant

D. Conclusions and Final Remarks

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).

E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Dr. Philip Vergauwen, Chair	
Prof. Dr. Anita Eves	
Prof. Dr. Andreas Papatheodorou	
Mrs. Katerina Evangelou	
Mr. (Eng.) Alexis Valiantis	
Mr. Georgios Aristotelous	

Date: January 21st 2022

