

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 03/03/2021

- **Higher Education Institution:**
CDA College

- **Town:** Limassol

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

In Greek:

Σχέδιο Μόδας (2 Χρόνια, Συν 1 Προαιρετικό
Προπαρασκευαστικό Έτος, Δίπλωμα)

In English:

Fashion Design (2 Years, Plus an Optional Foundation
Year, Diploma)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's 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 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

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.300.1.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.1.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

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

Findings

CDA has a robust quality assurance system in place with appropriate structures, regulations and processes. Via classroom observations and student surveys, important feedback is captured to support the quality assurance framework. There is student representation in the QR committee to make the student voice heard and a robust and inclusive system in place for design, approval and monitoring of the programs, which was explained in the paperwork as well in the PowerPoint presentation during the visit. There was a clear identification that the Fashion Programme, first accredited in 2015, was developed based on market research and was developed based on the needs of the local context of Cyprus. In addition, it was explained that the programme sat succinctly within the existing CDA portfolio opening up the opportunity for cross disciplinary activities. Although the current student number is currently low (4 students instead of 10 per semester) the course maintained 100% progression on a regular basis. Students were satisfied with the course and the ones present at the day of the visit were still studying or had entered into the profession they had aimed for. More data and statistics about graduates, student grades have been requested by EEC and were provided after the visit.

Most Art and Design education select their students based on a portfolio. Selection criteria at CDA only require a level of English and FE diploma. As a vocational Diploma running over 2 years the Fashion programme accommodates the students to learn the art and design skills to be a successful fashion designer with no previous experience or creative skill base. This is both a privilege and a strength.

Strengths

CDA offers 2 years vocational training to prepare them for industry. The structure and content of the courses seems to work well for the students who are well versed in the support and skills training they need to be prepared to start businesses as fashion entrepreneurs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The capturing of student work is an essential component of Creative courses as a means of archiving graduate work as well a tool for marketing. A digital portfolio of work is now common practice across the sector and the EEC would recommend that students could develop digital portfolios either in the first instance or digitised from the traditional portfolio format as part of the summative assessment process.

The work produced on the course drawn from the digital archive could therefore be more visible on the website and across any CDA social media platforms.

Response of the Higher Education Institution (HEI)

1. As per the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC) recommendation, the traditional portfolio of the students is now changed to digitized format. As from now on, all future graduates of the Fashion Design Diploma will be required to develop a digital portfolio including a selection of the student's best work produced during their studies. All images will be in jpeg format and 72dpi resolution,



flattened and optimised for screen viewing using Photoshop. Furthermore, their digital portfolio will be published on a selection of e-platforms as chosen by the student as well as the website and social media platforms of CDA College to act as a marketing tool for attracting future student applicants.

2. Finally, the comments of the EEC are very positive and the 1st section **Study programme and study programme's design and development** is evaluated as Compliant.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3)

Findings

The EEC discussed with the team the content of the course and kind of modifications had been made after the launch in 2015 to enhance the student experience and why? The team explained they have started to integrate more slow fashion/sustainable topics in the curriculum because this has come up as a main issue in the global fashion system which needs to be addressed. Some minor changes have been made: digital pattern cutting not considered because it was not relevant in the local context of Cyprus. The reviewers found the integration of e-business in the course an interesting and unique asset for the program. It prepares students to start their business/company in an innovative way, using contemporary platforms to sell. Also Psychology which is an elective in the course was perceived as an unique enrichment of the course. With a strong focus on making skills/the vocational training in fashion design, the e-business and Psychology addition are given the program an unique profile and critical underpinning for students when considering the development of individual fashion collections or product lines. Student assessment was appropriate against the tasks and requirements defined within the course documentation.

Intake numbers of 10 students per semester and the numerous teaching staff with different expertise are offering the students a rich experience. The teaching is student-centered, there is enough staff to help, coach, mentoring the students in addition to the formal teaching hours. The Staff are able to set up the timetables in dialogue with the students allowing for co-creation of the delivery schedule accommodating the students personal circumstances which impacted on traditional college timetables.

Since it is a vocational course the curriculum is divided into very clear tasks and outcomes: with a number of well prescribed and appropriate tasks which incrementally build the required skills to be a successful fashion designer. Students have small deadlines every other week to ease their study management and ensure they are able to divide and complete the workload required successfully. Clear information and tasks are set out in the handbooks and guidelines.

Students reported to be very happy with the content and delivery of the course.

The 2 year emphasis and strong focus on making skills/ vocational training in fashion design is a strength. As are the supplementary subjects of e-business and Psychology which gives the programme a unique profile.

Strengths

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Due to the small numbers timetables are flexible, adaptable to students' needs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Since new business models in fashion are invariably selling through digital platforms in the first instance and as many of the students joining CDA aim to start their own business, further focus on e-business, Instagram, social media etc would be worth exploring.

Response of the Higher Education Institution (HEI)

The Fashion Design modules have already incorporated the marketing and selling through digital platforms which will help them to create their own business. More specifically, the course FASH490 E-Business module already endorses examples, case studies and projects directly related to the focus on e-business in relation to the fashion industry. The module was designed to reflect the contemporary e-commerce models of selling and marketing fashion products, such as fashion oriented e-commerce platforms, online stores, Instagram, social media etc. Nevertheless, CDA college has proceeded in enriching the required and suggested reading material by adding e-commerce books directly related to the fashion industry. Specifically:

- Guide to Apparel eCommerce: How to Build a Solid Foundation for Your Online Store.
M. Camara, AJ. Camara, 2018
- Social Media for Fashion Marketing: Storytelling in a Digital World.
W.K. Bondoni, 2017
- The Fundamentals of Digital Fashion Marketing.
Harris, 2017
- Digital Business and E-Commerce Management
D. Chaffey, 2019

Finally, the comments of the EEC are very positive and the 2nd section **Teaching, learning and student assessment** is evaluated as Compliant.

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Findings

The staff were well qualified covering a different range of expertise and specialisms. Most of the staff holds an MA or PhD or are engaged with their own professional Fashion practice. For students it is very important to have teachers who are firmly rooted in the creative industries of Cyprus (offering them connectivity to local networks and relationships with local manufacturers). In addition a majority of them have an international/global network due to their studies or jobs abroad which in turn supports the student experience.

Practice based research and research outcomes are not obliged for the members of staff aligned to the Fashion Program (diploma level) but staff is encouraged and invited to join CDA research infrastructure. The number and variety of staff is outstanding. The teaching hours in the timetable are substantial. They have enough time to offer students tutorials, mentoring and guidance.

Exchange activities was questioned in the meeting. How often are guest lecturers invited, are there any collaborations with industry other than visits?

Strengths

The staff are very qualified covering a different range of expertise. Most of the staff holds a MA or PhD or they have their own professional Fashion practice. The staff team were committed and positive and were highly respected by the student body.

The student staff ratio is very healthy with enough permanent staff to teach and support students via guidance, tutorials and mentoring and open door policy.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

With larger size cohorts exchange activities could further improve student satisfaction and experientially prepare them for their future careers.

Cross disciplinary collaborative projects within the college with Aesthetics and Hairdressing for example as part of fashion events, photo shoots etc both internally and with external stakeholders such as local designers and local industry could also benefit the student experience and professional connections.

Response of the Higher Education Institution (HEI)

Students of the fashion design programme are currently practicing cross disciplinary collaborative projects within the college and specifically with the departments of Aesthetics and Hairdressing. Prove of this are the following practices:

1. At the end of the year the fashion design students present their final year project (collection) through either fashion shows and/or exhibitions in collaboration with the Aesthetics and Hairdressing.
2. Through mixed class teaching modules (FASH490 E-Business, PSY401 Psychology).



3. Participating in CDA College extracurricular activities such as charity fashion shows.
4. Educational and/or activity days organised by the college with all departments participate.

Students are already exposed to external stakeholders such as local designers and local industry. Prove of this are the following practices:

1. Industry related guests visit the colleges premises once a year.
2. All graduates of the fashion design program have visited through scheduled educational trips:
 - a. Local designer ateliers
 - b. Local industry related suppliers and/or factories.

However, the department intends to improve the collaboration with the local industry in regards to memberships with fashion associations/organisations, interaction with industry mentors and consolidate in collaborative projects with local business. This will definitely add value to the overall experience and professional connections of the students.

Finally, the comments of the EEC are very positive and the 3rd section **Teaching staff** is evaluated as Compliant.

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Findings

Admissions are not based on a portfolio as required in many other European countries. Instead, CDA Fashion Design offers an inclusive approach, often recruiting mature students and students making career changes to the programme who are able to learn all the creative skills without any prior knowledge. As a conversion course this seems to be incredibly effective, as progression rates are very high and students therefore seem to know what they are subscribing for.

Regulations regarding students progression are in place as well as monitoring and student progression are robust. CDA has an agreement with 25 universities and is part of Erasmus exchange, but for the Fashion programme this area is still in an initial stage and underdeveloped. It could benefit from a strategy here (see recommendation chapter 3)

Strengths

Admissions are not based on a portfolio as required in many other European countries. Instead CDA Fashion Design offers the learning of basic creative skills at the outset.

Progression rates are at 100% which is remarkable and should be commended.

The nature, timeline and activities are excellent in accommodating mature students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

CDA has an agreement with 25 universities and is part of Erasmus exchange, but for the Fashion programme this area is still in an initial stage and underdeveloped. It could benefit from a strategy here.

Response of the Higher Education Institution (HEI)

CDA College collaborates with European Higher Education Institutions under ERASMUS+. CDA College has signed agreements with 25 European Universities for the exchange of number of students and professors between the Universities for study and teaching respectively in all academic areas. These partnerships with foreign Universities support the internationalization of the CDA College student and academic community, the mutual exchange of international good teaching practices and the continued pursuit of scientific excellence.

Due to the small size of students registered, the Fashion Design Department lacks of participation in the Erasmus+ programme offered to the students and staff of the college. However, the College will further increase its incentives and encouragement so as the students to participate to the Erasmus programs. The intention of the department is to actively get involved in upcoming activities and exchange programs offered by Erasmus+ in the immediate future.

Finally, the comments of the EEC are very positive and the 4th section **Students** is evaluated as Compliant.

5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

Findings

The course descriptions and outlines are clear with accessible teaching and learning resources. The program also has adapted successful Covid-19 restrictions to offer a blended delivery model of online delivery and socially distanced studio/workshop activities on campus.

The library made a special effort to put in place a new policy enabling students to collect books. The reviewers were impressed by the size and content of the library.

Regarding the physical resources, basic sewing facilities, including lockstitch machines and overlooking machine and steam iron are available. Students answered that the resources were adequate. The panel however would like to recommend consideration to add more specific equipment for the construction of sportswear (stretch fabrics) which would enhance the student experience and give professional finishes to these types of garment which make up a substantial area of the market in contemporary fashion.

The programme is flexible and does offer support for mature students, or for those who are employed via a flexible timetable. There are systems in place for students with financial problems or for students with disabilities all of which are well documented and robustly delivered.

Strengths

The library is well resourced and up to date.

Resources for the designing cutting and make of fashion products is appropriate

Flexibility and co-creation to adapt the timetable suitable for students' needs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

As numbers increase back to normal levels suggest specialist machinery for knitted fabrics (stretch) ie flatlocker/coverstitch and/or 4/5 thread overlocker.

Response of the Higher Education Institution (HEI)

Currently there are only 4 students studying in the programme. Of course in the future as the number of students registered increases the College has plans to expand the space of the current fashion design studio if necessary including any essential tools or equipment as suggested by the EEC.

Namely machinery for knitted fabrics (stretch) such as a flatlocker/coverstitch and/or 4/5 thread overlocker suggested will be strongly considered to be added in our equipment.

Finally, the comments of the EEC are very positive and the 5th section **Resources** is evaluated as Compliant.



6. Additional for distance learning programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A Not Applicable



7. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A Not Applicable



8. Additional for joint programmes
(ALL ESG)

N/A Not Applicable

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Findings

The virtual event undertaken by the EEC was extremely well organised with clear explanations of the CDA college macro environment and the robust systems in place which support the overall management and accountability processes that fully support the student experience. The staff team across all levels from senior management to individual course team members were fully engaged with the process, which made the evaluation from the EEC point of view straightforward and coherent.

Specifically in terms of the Diploma in Fashion design which is being validated it was clear that the team had developed the curriculum, from its original validation, in response to the business climate in Cyprus and the broader issues surrounding the fashion industry which should be commended. The students were very clear that the 2-year duration of the course and its vocational narrative and learning activities alongside the opportunity to engage in learning at a timetable that suits their needs was a significant reason for them choosing the course. The numbers allow this to occur and the open door policy and staff student relationship meant that a professional partnership with the student and staff team developed readily. The staff team were committed and positive with a range of specialisms that fully informed the curriculum, and with the opportunity for students to study E-business and Psychology the course not only explores the practical skills aspects of being a fashion designer but also targeted underpinning and critical understanding of both contemporary business platforms and opportunities and a reasoning behind clothing both of which should also be commended.

The staff were extremely candid about the difficulties in recruiting students, as a direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic with students reluctant to engage with a practical studio/workshop programme which may not in real deliver what is prescribed at its outset. However, they are confident in moving forward that the cohort size would increase as the pandemic abates as the provision itself is strong and serves a specific market which the EEC agrees. As the restrictions lift it may therefore be an opportunity for the course and CDA to support Fashion and other related courses within the college through a marketing exercise which uses ex-students as case studies and promotes the creative industries as a viable and exciting career prospect from a vocational lens. This could be supported as already noted by collating and archiving student work as a matter of course and developing cross-disciplinary projects/activities internally and externally to raise the profile of the course as well as the perceptions of the broader public.

Evidence suggests that future jobs within the fashion industry may well come through e-business, and creative activities on a small to medium scale, often localised, as the fashion industry re-aligns itself to re-thinking its approaches to global manufacturing and high capacity production. The course already prepares students for these types of activities and should be in a good position to further develop future facing fashion professionals.

Response of the Higher Education Institution (HEI)

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) rated all modules of the program very positively (Compliant) and the College has already taken the appropriate measures by immediately implementing all the recommendations.



There is full compliance to all the suggestions raised by the EEC. In the above program the College applies high quality criteria and it is constantly upgraded in accordance with the regulations of the Agency for Quality Assurance and Certification of Higher Education (CY.Q.A.A). As can be seen from our response, we have already taken immediate action and adopted the EEC's suggestions and recommendations for further improvement and competitiveness of our Fashion Design programme.

CDA College will strengthen its position and be more competitive in the education market by further highlighting the strengths of the College and the curriculum in a digitized format. The College firmly believes that the program "Fashion Design" has a lot to offer to the Higher Education and to the vital and dynamic Fashion sector.

Finally, we once again point out the very positive evaluation of the program by the EEC which was evaluated compliant in all modules with the required standards and the full compliance and the implementation of all the recommendations raised by the EEC and we look forward in your positive response.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Όνομα	Θέση	Υπογραφή
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