



Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: Date.

- **Higher Education Institution:**

ALEXANDER COLLEGE

- **Town: LARNACA**

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

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Business Administration and Finance (4years, 240,
BSc

- **Language(s) of instruction: ENGLISH**

- **Programme's status: Currently Operating**

- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



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.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) 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 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 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*
- *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, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

EEC "Findings

The EEC believes that the currently offered BSc Business Administration and Finance provides a good platform on which to further improve the program.

The committee was provided with information regarding the entry criteria, the program's learning outcomes, the delivery of modules, and the assessment procedures.

The EEC found the admission criteria to be adequate and in line with those of other similar programs in the Cypriot market. The program appears to recruit well. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds.

The program spans over 4 years and expects students to undertake and successfully complete 240 ECTS. The proposed structure offers a reasonable balance between the number of modules and associated ECTS between the business administration modules and those related to finance.

The intended learning outcomes are in line with expectations for such a program, aiming to cover both the knowledge and skills that graduates should possess in order to find a relevant to the course job.

The EEC identified that there are policies and procedures in place that aim to ensure the quality of the new and established/revised programs. The overall framework within which quality assurance takes place is along the EEC expectations.

The EEC enquired about the career path of graduates and their potential employability challenges. It was positive to see a high per centage of students securing jobs after graduation that are relevant to their course.

Strengths

The EEC believes that the existing program is in a good state and can be revised in a way that results in an even better learning offering. The existing program offers a wide range of modules that cover the expected areas sufficiently. These provide the necessary background knowledge and skills students will require in order to secure jobs in their respective field.

Assessment is in line with expectations, featuring both exams and coursework for each module. These are operationalised within the framework set by Ministry of Education with regards to assessment.

The faculty members teaching on this program are qualified individuals with relevant expertise and sufficient years of teaching experience. It was positive to see that the majority of those teaching on

the programme were employed on a full-time basis. This can make it possible to ensure continuity and coherence of service.

The EEC positively noted that the College aimed to develop, promote, and reward research activities among its staff”.

“Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC believes that Alexander College management team alongside with the teaching staff should consider ways with which the program’s design, structure, and delivery can be improved. The suggestions below can inform this process, resulting in a clearer learning offering and hopefully a more sustainable program when it comes to student recruitment.

1) Although the program has clear learning outcomes and objectives it would be useful to have these mapped against the modules currently on offer. This will make it possible to explicitly demonstrate that the program meets its objectives. It may also make it possible to identify areas that knowledge development and skills practicing have not been developed sufficiently. In turn, the programme team can address them in future revisions of the program.

2) Similarly, to the programme objectives it would be useful to see that the programme team establishes a programme level assessment strategy. Teaching staff did mention that any changes to assessment are communicated and agreed with the programme coordinator. Although the EEC agrees that this is a good practice, the EEC feels that a more systematic approach would be beneficial to the programme and the student learning experience.

3) The EEC notes that a sufficient number of business administration and finance modules are offered throughout the program. The progression though from one stage/term to the next and the interconnections among the modules is not clear. A clearer mapping as to how students progress through the program (e.g. from the early introductory modules to the later more advanced ones) would be useful. Such a mapping exercise can also make it clear how many modules and what kind of skills students can potentially develop in the sub-themes/disciplines that the programme covers (e.g. in areas like marketing or ICTs).

4) Although the module outline forms sufficiently touched on the areas covered by the modules, these often appeared to be rather specific and eclectic in nature. Examples were mentioned to the programme team during the evaluation meetings. It would be useful to review the module outline forms (and likely the content of the modules) to ensure that they meet the necessary foundational knowledge and skills required in each area and that they do not invest in covering aspects that are not as important. While doing so, it would be useful to review reading lists/textbooks and update them with more recent ones, where possible.

5) The EEC agrees that offering a number of elective modules can help enhance the student experience. In the later stages of the program, students can select modules that are of interest to them and, to some extent, tailor the program to their individual needs/interests. Still the EEC believes that the electives offering could be better organised and delivered to make this a more sustainable offering. More specifically, given the number of students on the program, there may not be a critical mass of students to make each elective sustainable to run. Grouping electives in 2-3 thematic areas can both help plan better, but also ensure that students develop their expertise in the areas chosen. Such a recommendation can focus the efforts of the College on areas of demand, resulting in a shorter list of elective modules.

6) The EEC notes the College’s effort to offer practical skills and experience to students. In relation to points 2 and 5 above, it would be useful to identify all areas of the program that offer such

experience and communicate these more clearly to the students. Articulating more clearly how each module and assessment can contribute to employability could alleviate, to some extent, their concerns (especially those of international students) about their future career prospects.

7) Similarly, it would have been welcome to see how research (from the Centre, but also beyond) informs modules in a more explicit manner. To this end, it is important to have a clear plan as to how this can be embedded in the programme and modules so that it can make the expected impact”.

Response by Alexander College

Introduction

The College and the Programme team would like to extend their appreciation for the constructive spirit of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC). The EEC concluded that “the existing program is in a good state and can be revised in a way that results in an even better learning offering”. It has further suggested “improvements towards a clearer learning offering”. We have taken note of the overall positive remarks and assessment documented by the EEC. We have reflected on all EEC recommendations and have taken effective action to adapt and revise the Programme accordingly with the aim of offering a more beneficial and holistic student experience.

Actions by Alexander College based on EEC Recommendations for further improvement of program’s design, structure, and delivery based on the Areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review Partially compliant

1. The programme team has thoroughly reviewed modules to confirm that Programme’s general aims and overall learning outcomes (LOs) are met (See Annex-Matrix I and relevant Amended Module Descriptors document for confirmation) . The outcome of this Mapping process has transparently identified which Modules contribute to each intended LO. It is confirmed that each Module articulates clear links to more than one Programme LO. The process also suggests which Modules introduce, reinforce or emphasize the intended LOs. The re-designed Module descriptions allows for students to revisit content though at a different pace of complexity, reinforcing therefore learning. The Mapping exercise and discussions of the Programme members, helps to identify and address weaknesses and gaps of the learning process and consider priorities, alignment to outcomes or appropriations to Module specific outcomes, a better assessment design, new or newer versions of readings, modifications to the curriculum or methodology of teaching changes. Such a process has been evidently carried out.
2. The programme team¹ (as prescribed in the Quality Assurance of the Programme- Periodic Curriculum Review cycle) has concluded mapping Assessments per Module thus complementing the current procedure strategy. Programme Level Assessment is contingent to the aims and learning outcomes of each component and on the basis of the Programme aims and LOs. More specifically, we have reviewed different types of assessment, a variety of tasks and their weight and length. We further checked for potential over-assessment risks and other related imbalances; reviewed justification for each type of assessment and

¹ d) The Review Team will be constituted according to the scope and requirements of the review but is likely to include the Programme Leader(s), Head/Associate Head of Department, Module Leader(s) and appropriate Professional Service Staff. The Review Team will engage with critical self-reflection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to assess programme evolution and change over the period since the last review and plan for future enhancement and developments.

enriched progression with different tasks. The practical implications of the programme level assessment are evidenced in amended Module Descriptions and are again summarized in Annex I.

3. Progression of students through stages, advancement and skills intended to be acquired, is now set in a clearer form and can be more effectively communicated (see Annex II, Annex I and Amended Module Descriptors).
4. Module outline/descriptions were thoroughly reviewed and where appropriate, modified/adapted in order to meet the best possible foundational knowledge and skills required. Reading lists were updated and to some instances changed. Overall, general competences and subject related theoretical and practical and/or experimental knowledge is currently better reflected (for establishing the depth of relevant changes see Annex I and Amended Module Descriptions).
5. Despite the fact that for an Elective (in Bachelor courses) to be offered the number of students (for the specific Module) must in any case exceed eight for reasons of sustainability, the programme team has accepted the EEC suggestion and decided to reduce Electives from twelve(12) to nine (9) and to specifically organize them across the areas of Business and Finance (including Practical Training in these two areas) For more details see Annex III of Electives List and Amended Module Descriptors.
6. Employability: During discussions the EEC had with students, it was raised (by students) that the policy of the government with regards to employment of international students creates difficulties (in employability) to students or graduates. This opinion obviously has nothing to do with education, capabilities or services that the College and programme maintains and offers. Notwithstanding these, despite the fact that Programme objectives and LOs demonstrate intended employability competences, a more specific reference is made to Annex II “Stages/Terms of Progression and Skills” and to Amended Module Descriptions as far as employment skills and practice. It is pertinent to remind of the Practical Training during summer of 3rd year, and training opportunities through the Careers Office and Erasmus+. Furthermore Alexander College has concluded more than thirty MOU with Businesses and Organisations which may offer opportunities for training and jobs.
7. With respect to Recommendation 7, it is argued that Alexander College is gradually developing its research profile at a realistic pace based on our published Research Strategy (<https://alexander.ac.cy/research-centre/research-profile-and-strategy/>). Our Research progress is demonstrated among others, from the fact that we were recently awarded with Gold for Research at the Cyprus Education Leaders Awards 2021 for a pioneer project engaging Faculty and Students into the process, conduct and analysis.

Despite possible gaps and inconsistencies, for Alexander College research informed teaching is considered as invaluable for students. This has in first instance been acknowledged by the EEC: “The faculty’s research may also inform their teaching”. It enhances learning and real-life experiences, helps develop critical awareness and enhances skills which are also relevant to pathways to future employment.

As prescribed in the Internal Quality Assurance Framework (evidenced in the Application DOC), Programme Team Members, discuss the curriculum in light of new knowledge and research, a condition embedded to all Programmes through the policy for research and particular documents (see <https://alexander.ac.cy/research-centre/#policy>).

It should be emphasized, that in light of effectively implementing the suggestions of the current EEC panel, an extraordinary process took place which further updated and ultimately enhanced the programme content also in terms of Research Informed Teaching, evidenced in a variety of Modules throughout learning stages and is more focused at the later stages of the programme. To name a few, Developing Academic and Professional Skills, Research Methods, Research Project (I and II), Contemporary Topics in Business Administration, Leadership and Management, Managerial Accounting, Accounting for Managers, Operations Management, Marketing Intelligence and Consumer Behaviour, Introduction to Sociology, Taxation, Enterprise, Innovation and Creativity, Business Ethics. Actions we have committed include new readings of international research outputs and research initiated or supported by the faculty members, the Research Centre and other research Organisations.

Research orientated teaching is also promoted in the programme components whereas students learn to apply methods to discuss and solve problems in business and professional contexts. Critical discussions and participation into the research process is also promoted not only through relevant modules but through structures (i.e. Student Research Committee where Academics develop and promote research led, orientated, tutored and based teaching; students conduct literature searching tasks, write a project outline and an ethics and data protocol, enter data to SPSS or Qualtrics and shadowing analysis); Conferences, seminars, workshops etc. Low stake projects and dissertation are also part of research led teaching.

Research-informed teaching at the Alexander College is promoted through <https://alexander.ac.cy/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Research-Excellence-Framework.pdf> which aims to create an environment friendly to research with disciplinary, interdisciplinary characteristics. Further to this, a research informed environment through a variety of synergies is developed (see specifically Research Policy <https://alexander.ac.cy/research-centre/>).

Teaching-Research pathway staff (see response in section 3, see also relevant Annex on Academic Career Pathways) develop themes of research (areas) whereas the process and more importantly outcomes enlighten teaching through seminars, workshops, presentations (<https://alexander.ac.cy/research-centre/#research-themes>). For instance the study of Micro and Small Businesses in relation to the introduction of Technology is a major theme which relates to the Programme and to society more importantly. The same goes as far as the Procurement Management theme is concerned, where the theme participants have designed a pioneer research, organizing seminars and a Conference.

Publications, exposure and participation to Conferences is now aligned to our strategy and actively being pursued. Therefore, our Research mission enriched by the research interests of the members of the Programme produce a research process and research outcomes which among other, inform the Programme to the extent this is possible based on capabilities and research interests.

It is currently clear that Teaching and Scholarship of Teaching projects (on the basis of the workload as per Academic Career Development) and research related to different programmes including the BSc Business Administration and Finance, “aligned with key organisational-Programme strategies which have stated objectives with key deliverables”, are promoted and planned under specific procedures.

Furthermore, the curriculum encourages students to explore existing and discover new knowledge; through Facilities which offer incentives to apply and seek knowledge (Orange Lab, Financial Trading Centre).

Additionally, through enhancing Research development of academics and structured cooperation with Organizations. The latter is promoted via Regulations on conducting Research at Alexander College , Research Excellence Framework Request Form for Internal Funding/Items Purchase, Research Sponsorship Request Form (<https://alexander.ac.cy/research-centre/#brochure> ; <https://alexander.ac.cy/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Regulations-on-conducting-Research-at-Alexander-College.pdf> ; <https://alexander.ac.cy/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Research-Excellence-Framework.pdf>)

As will be evidenced later on we have specified a Teaching Research Pathway <https://alexander.ac.cy/about-us/academic-career-development-at-alexander-college/>

In many instances, Research Centre projects (see <https://alexander.ac.cy/research-centre/#recent-activities>) are part of recommended readings or are part of the outline of appropriate Modules of the Programme. These include “Public Procurement: Harmonization, Implementation, Audit and Effectiveness in the Republic of Cyprus-exploratory research”, “Wisdom Intelligence Creativity Synthesized”, two research projects “Economic Activity and Performance in Larnaca-SmallEconBigVision”, “Μελέτη για τις πιθανές επιπτώσεις ανέγερσης μεγάλων εμπορικών κέντρων (Malls) επί των μικρών καταστημάτων της Λάρνακας. Κίνητρα και Αντισταθμιστικά Μέτρα για τις πολύ μικρές και μικρές επιχειρήσεις”. Further to the above, active participation of students in delivery of Modules may be assessed (10%).

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

EEC “Areas of improvement and recommendations

There are no major drawbacks in this section. The EEC suggests considering increasing where possible the level of practical training that would with SMEs or relevant stakeholders in Cyprus. Connect to societal issues relevant to such actors, can lead to new sources of funding and internships where students can work or have an internship on higher level with the companies or organisations in the specialties of the students.

The programme is compatible with the professional employment of the students prior to, during and upon completion of their studies. However, the job market is not open especially for foreign students who are the majority of the programme. In this sense, their studies should be integrated more smoothly into their professional careers afterwards, enhancing their career prospects and adding value to all stakeholders and the broader job market. Grouping the elective courses may be a helpful action on this front”

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

Sub-area

Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student centred teaching methodology

Compliant

2.2 Practical training Compliant

2.3 Student assessment Compliant

Response

In response to the above stated suggestions, it has been accepted to group Electives on the basis of themes- areas, as demonstrated in Annex III Electives and in Amended Module Descriptors. The Alexander College offers practical training to a variety of Organisations based on comprehensive MOUs (see indicatively <https://alexander.ac.cy/research-centre/#business-research>). This list is continuously updated and upgraded with more Organisations.

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

EEC Findings

The EEC noted that the BSc programme is supported by a well-qualified faculty. The EEC also observed that members of staff have several years of experience in their field, as well as teaching experience.

Overall, there is a good fit between the teaching team's qualifications and expertise with the course units they deliver. There is a ratio of 70/30% for full and part time faculty members which is well balanced for Alexander College.

From the evidence gathered, the faculty appears to be involved with some research activities, albeit in different levels among the faculty members.

During the virtual visit, the teaching staff was praised by students for both the quality of teaching and the level of support received.

Strengths

The faculty members involved in the BSc programme appear to be committed to the programme. The specialization fields of the faculty members are reflected on the content of the programme and in their teaching roles. The faculty's research may also inform their teaching. Teaching outcomes are monitored and reviewed by the AoQ and College's committees. Any issues arising are dealt with in a timely and professional manner.

The programme makes an effort to draw upon qualified academics from other institutions in teaching, research, assessments and committees.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Overall, there is a good fit between the faculty team's qualifications and expertise with the course units they deliver, there are few points to be considered. The College provides some central procedures to support staff career development. However, there is no compulsory and clear activity menu that leads to promotion, course development, programme development, workload sheet per year, requirements, and criteria, that is compulsory for all staff.

On the positive side, the EEC found that the College is supporting its staff to undertake some research and disseminate their research findings through the appropriate channels. However, there is not a clear path of Research centre's outcomes and expectations, as there are no specific criteria on how to join, what the delivery is (or should be).

Staff outcomes are monitored. Still, the substance of these assessments is not entirely clear in terms of the action taken, to further contribute as an overall assessment of the whole programme.

The programme makes an effort to draw upon staff suggestions on course development, which is essential especially for the proposed electives. However, participation does not seem to be clear and sufficient. Neither is it clear how this is reflected on staff workload.

The EEC further suggests some recommendations for the faculty participating in this BSc programme.

1. It is not clear how staff assessment and outcome delivery are actioned. This is a digression from international standards and so an adjustment can be taken into consideration.

2. It is important that a sufficiently robust teaching and research activity path is embedded into the programme. More centralised and clear rules, in terms of career development, should be given to those who participate in the programme. Any research activity that might be added to this unit should be specified in advance. There must be a clear support mechanism for staff members so they can innovate and excel pedagogically.

3. It is necessary to establish a clear path for capturing staff contribution to course/programme development in relation to an established workload policy.

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

Sub-area

Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development Partially compliant

3.2 Teaching staff number and status Compliant

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research Not applicable

Response

The Alexander College adopts the recommendations of the EEC as exemplified in Annex IV which complements existing policies such as the Research Excellence Framework (<https://alexander.ac.cy/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Research-Excellence-Framework.pdf>) which aims to motivate, support and recognise the contributions that individual academic staff make to the College. The new document (see ANNEX IV) is based on the principle of creating fair and transparent processes for the development of the staff. It makes clear how faculty assessment and outcome delivery is actioned. Additionally, Teaching & Research is now structured and evidence based as part of academic career development and a support mechanism headed by the Academic Director is envisaged. Evidence of staff contribution in relation to workload police and promotion purposes is established and is hereby developed in more detail. It should be also remembered that staff contribution in the development of the Programme is provided in the Internal Quality Assurance regulation (in the original application). Seen altogether, the new policy reflects the importance of Teaching, Research and Leadership at Alexander College and is based on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area; good practices and Alexander College's capabilities. The new Alexander College actions based on EEC recommendations also take into consideration that Alexander College is not structured across Schools, Faculties and Departments.

Lastly, to clarify, as far as the Alexander Research Centre (ARC) is concerned, this is developed according to its institutional statute and bodies, namely the Board of Directors and the Academic Council. The ARC as provided in its establishment statute, develops its aims in relation to Alexander College's mission and programmes while it also holds autonomous partnerships where this is appropriate. ARC's members of the Academic Council are elected once every year. In practice it consists of research orientated academics of the Alexander College and faculty from other Universities/Organisations. Its annual plan of activities is based on thematic areas where academics participate. See evidence (brochure) and video-testimonials <https://alexander.ac.cy/5-chronia-erevniko-kentro-alexander/>



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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

To the degree possible, the College is encouraged to help international students with improving their job prospects both during their studies and after they graduate. Within state regulations, such help may manifest in short stints in companies, internships and the like.

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

Sub-area

Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria Compliant

4.2 Student progression Compliant

4.3 Student recognition Compliant

4.4 Student certification Compliant

Response

We are fully aware of the conditions noted by the EEC, agree and apply, continuously, their suggestion.

5. Learning resources and student support

(ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The library has access to EBSCO and this appears to work well as it offers sufficient coverage of relevant resources. That said, and in the spirit of further improvement, the College may consider joining the Cyprus-wide network of university libraries to secure access to additional material.

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

Sub-area

Non-compliant/Partially Compliant/Compliant

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources Compliant

5.2 Physical resources Compliant

5.3 Human support resources Compliant

5.4 Student support Compliant

Response

The College agrees with the feedback of the EEC. The College continuously provides a range of resources to assist student learning. Despite our repeated past efforts (March 2019), it has proven difficult to join the consortium KKυB, of Cyprus Libraries during that period. By the time the response of the KKυB arrived, we were already implementing the new partnership with EBSCO. We are considering future cooperation with the Consortium.



6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Click or tap here to enter text.



7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

Click or tap here to enter text.



B. Conclusions and final remarks

Alexander College and the Programme Team considers the external evaluation process as invaluable for improving quality and an opportunity to demonstrate -transparently- our dedication to the learning process in a student centred environment. We thus thank the EEC for its constructive and comprehensive feedback.

We have applied all recommendations which ultimately build on the EEC's own assessments that the existing (BSc Business Administration and Finance) "is in a good state and can be revised in a way that results in an even better learning offering".



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: 16/05/2022

