

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 13.12.2019

Higher Education Institution's response

- **Higher education institution:**

NEAPOLIS UNIVERSITY PAFOS

- **Town:** PAFOS

- **Programme of study (Name, ECTS, duration, cycle)**

In Greek: Μεταπτυχιακό στο Διεθνές και Ευρωπαϊκό Οικονομικό Δίκαιο, 90 ECTS, 2/3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, Μεταπτυχιακό.

In English: LLM in International and European Business Law, 2/3 academic semesters, 90 ECTS, Postgraduate.

- **Language of instruction:** Greek, English

- **Programme's status**

New programme:

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 and 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015 and N. 47(I)/2016].

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.*

We first of all express our gratitude to the EEC for its comments and recommendations. As we also believe that there is room for improvement, we have proceeded to respond accordingly in order to FULLY comply with the EEC's suggestions and recommendations.

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

Comment 1: The committee feels that the study programme, as it currently runs, is a very good attempt to address some of the most pressing legal issues in the field of international and European economic law. However, the committee was less impressed by the depth of public information given to those interested to enroll in the programme, but more importantly the actual content of the programme, including the teaching material; the focus on practical aspects regarding international business law; or the sufficiency of the programme's research component. In addition, the committee would have liked to receive more information as to how the quality of the programme is guaranteed and whether a standard review process is regularly triggered with a view to ensuring that the programme complies with high academic standards in the field.

Answer: Done. The Programme Curriculum (Programme's Study Guide, See Annex 1, Programme Revised Curriculum) is enriched with important information and materials as following:

All courses' study guides have been reorganized and enriched with an up-to-date catalogue of international bibliography, such as books, monographs, book's chapters and academic articles. Teaching and study materials have been added in all courses' study guides and have been placed in each teaching week accordingly, increasing significantly the study workload.

In addition, the Programme Curriculum is reframed and enriched with more concise information about the Programme's Objectives and Learning Outcomes (PLOs), mapping of PLOs with LLM courses, specific students' admission requirements, an additional introductory course to law and legal studies, specific students' evaluation methods, explanation about written assignments, midterm assessment and formative assessment, including exercises that focus on practical aspects and promote research, as well as providing detailed information about the Dissertation Handbook [See Annex 3: Dissertation Handbook], the Assessment Guidelines for written Assignments [See Annex 4: Assessment Guidelines for written Assignments] and the Formative Assessment [see Annex 5: Formative Assessment], contained in separate Annexes. All of the above aspects are further elaborated in the following sections.

Comment 2: More specifically, the committee identified various overlaps among courses that call for a review that will streamline the content given to the students throughout the programme.

Answer: Done: The content of some courses have changed so as to avoid overlaps among courses. A representative example is the "Internal Market" study guide which has been redesigned so there is no overlapping with the study guide of the "Competition Law" Course. [See Annex 1 Revised Curriculum: Sections 10 and 17]

Comment 3: It also came to the committee's attention that, in view of the broad pool that the law school draws LLM students from, a crash course introducing the students with no legal background to the basics of law and legal theory but also an introduction to the relevant institutions and jargon relating to international business law is warranted.

Answer: Done. Having elaborated on the general admission criteria, (see Annex 1, Programme revised Curriculum, Section 3) these are based on the type and quality of previous studies, the grade obtained in previous studies and the suitability of the candidate for the programme of study that has been applied for. **Candidates must possess a Bachelor Degree or equivalent in Law or in any other field related to Law.** The University's admission policy is to make admission offers to applicants who are perceived as having the law and legal-related background and abilities to have a reasonable expectation of success in the programme to which they are made an offer and who are likely to benefit from university study.

Additionally, a non-mandatory course will be offered before the main taught programme for those graduates accepted for this degree, who have not had any recent exposure or experience in handling legal academic sources and working with legal texts and would like to refresh their knowledge of legal institutions and principles.

The course will provide students with a framework for legal research and writing, as well as a practical understanding of the process of identifying and organizing jurisprudence, national legislation, EU and international sources of law. Through this course, students are expected to enhance their analytical skills, and in particular the ability to use legal sources, express clear legal arguments and provide solutions to current legal problems (see Annex 2, Study guide of *DLLM 500 - Introduction to law and legal studies*)

Comment 4: Moreover, the syllabi shared with the committee currently fail to reflect the latest research developments in the field, as they do not include a list of recent journal articles for each one of the fields covered in the programme.

Answer: Done. Each course's study guide is enriched with additional bibliography, such as up-to-date articles from the top journals in the field for further reading of great relevance with the subject matter and the content of each week.

Comment 5. For instance, the programme alleges to take an empirical approach to the study of business law; yet, as it stands, the programme shies away from giving any indication as how this is set in motion. Furthermore, while the programme strives for strengthening the negotiation skills and initiate students to dispute resolution practices, a case law-based approach with a thorough analysis of cases (and practice with fictitious ones, eg in the form of a moot court among students or group presentations) appears to be missing from all courses.

Answer: Done. All courses' study guides have been redesigned including up-to-date reading materials, written exercises, activities to be assessed as well as formative assessment activities. The articles that are embodied in the bibliography, reflect the market tendencies that are totally necessary for the familiarisation of the students with the current practical topics.

All courses' study guides include written exercises and methods of formative assessment that are thoroughly described under Section 10 of the Programme Curriculum "Assignments-Assessment". More specifically, all courses' study guides added exercises reflecting a more critical approach of the study programme (See Annex 1: Section 17). Such exercises include discussion forums with feedback from the teacher or peer. Several discussion forums strengthen the student's negotiation skills. In addition, a case law based approach and particularly a case study activity is included, according to which students are given a real or hypothetical legal case to thoroughly analyze. Case

Law study enables the confrontation of the students with the crucial topics of each law field in the students' daily professional life. In addition, some other exercises consist of: *Video recording according to which students analyze* a given audio recording and submit a report to the teacher and comment on each other's views. This activity can take several forms, as: A literature review, according to which students research a topic and prepare a report on that topic with proper citations to literature used, a peer review exercise according to which students judge the accuracy, credibility value of the work of other students and a quizzing exercise where students use an online quizzing programme to take a quiz.

Comment 6: More broadly, there seems to be a mismatch between the learning goals set out in the overall programme design and the actual goals of each course that forms part of the programme. Such a misalignment clearly affects the expectations of students and would need to be addressed soon so that they know what they can expect during the three-semester programme and what type of skills they will be improving before enrolling in the programme.

Answer: Done. The Programme's goals and learning outcomes (PLOs) have been redesigned so that they correspond to the revised and updated version of the courses' study guides. The correspondence between the Programme's learning outcomes and the learning outcomes of each study guide is summarized in the "Mapping of PLOs/LLM Courses" table. (See Annex 1: Programme Revised Curriculum: Section 2).

Comment 7. Crucially, the committee had serious concerns about students' workload relative to the ECTS students receive. A potential solution would be to increase the number of readings so that 7.5 credits for each course are justified. Another solution would be to decrease the number of ECTS given for each course to properly reflect the student workload required.

Answer: Done. The students' workload has been increased significantly, mainly through activities enhancing interaction, critical analysis, participation and formative assessment tasks as well as the reading material, being now part of all courses' study guides and placed in each teaching week accordingly.

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

Comment 1: Our only concern in that regard is that the course outlines did not make clear which learning outcomes are pursued by each teaching or assessment method, or other activity. The institution could meet that concern easily with appropriate sign-posting (e.g. to identify points that go towards developing critical thinking as ‘critical reflection’ points, etc.)

Answer: Done. At the end of each course’s study guide, a specific table has been added, mapping the course’s learning outcomes and the specific teaching and assessment method that is selected in each course.

Comment 2: We believe that the programme provides students with sufficient opportunities for active participation, but we would encourage the institution to come up with strategies to ensure adequate ‘take-up’ of those opportunities, e.g. by linking online discussion forums more closely to classroom discussion.

Answer: Done. All courses’ study guides have incorporated exercises that promote students’ active participation such as on line discussion forums linked with classroom discussion.

Comment 3: We were happy that the materials are adequate and the teaching notes are up-to-date, but we would emphasize the importance of keeping the bibliography in the course outlines updated, which wasn’t always the case.

Answer: Done. All courses’ study guides have been reorganized and enriched with an up-to-date catalogue of international bibliography, such as books, monographs, book’s chapters and academic articles.. See also previous answer about the study workload.

Comment 4. Our main concern was that the course outlines are basically prescribing textbook reading, and refer to hardly any articles or book chapters. This is a serious shortcoming, because it fails to expose students to cutting-edge research and to familiarize them with the most recent debates and questions. We strongly recommend that the institution revisit the course outlines with that in mind. As we state in section 1, we believe that this increase in student workload would actually enhance the value of the course for students, and justify the 7.5 ECTS credit weighting.

2.11-12 We are satisfied that the programme develops students’ research skills and learning-by-inquiry. As noted in section 1, our concern is that the course outlines do not include any further reading, which limits the opportunities students have to determine the depth of their own study. We would recommend the addition of further reading in each week of the semester (except perhaps week 1 or 2).

Answer: Done. The number of reading materials has increased in all courses’ study guides and placed in each teaching week accordingly, increasing significantly the study workload.

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Comment 1: One problem might be that the workload of the faculty seems to be very high. The workload model/work-role model needs for adjustments to secure both a high teaching standard and a high research standard. Because of the very conventional approach of the programme, faculty should also be trained by international renowned experts and should attend international conferences, if possible. European and International Economic Law is vibrant and important area of law and only an active engagement culture of the faculty can ensure a high quality of the programme. The faculty should also take into consideration to add more practitioners.

Answer: Done. An Assistant Professor for Criminal Law has already been approved by the University's Council and is about to be elected in order to limit the teaching load of teaching staff. Additionally, Professor Michalis Pazartzis, NUP full time staff has also been added in the Program Faculty in order to complement in at least two courses which are part of his specialty, being expert on issues including international transactions and specialized topics of International Trade Law. Furthermore, the University supports and has already accepted during the current semester with full funding the participation of 2 academics teaching at this LLM at conferences and symposiums on relevant subjects, taking place abroad.

4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Comment 1: The committee is concerned about whether the students with no legal background can understand and meet the requirements of an LLM and the relevant terminology and legal thinking without an introductory course about the fundamentals of the legal system and thinking.

Answer: Done.

As stated in our response the program is open to law and law related applicants. However, as mentioned above, a non-mandatory course will be offered before the main taught programme, for those law-related graduates accepted for this degree, who have not had any exposure or experience in handling legal academic sources and working with legal texts and lack basic knowledge of legal institutions and principles.

The course will provide students with a framework for legal research and writing, as well as a practical understanding of the process of identifying and organizing jurisprudence, national legislation, EU and international sources of law. Through this course, students are expected to enhance their analytical skills, and in particular the ability to use legal sources, express clear legal arguments and provide solutions to current legal problems. The syllabus of the course is also attached in Annex 1, Section 17.

5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

Comment 1: The law student-teacher ratio should allow the academic staff to sustain close connections with the students and provide academic and psychological support. However, this university should take into consideration frequent consultation sessions with experts. It has been mentioned by the teachers and the students of the conventional programme that the S.K.E.P.S.I.S. Center initiates contact with on-campus students twice within the course and they are also available for any student-triggered interaction.

Answer: Pastoral support for students is an integrated part of the University taking the form of dedicated lectures on specific issues, as well as Counselling and Consultation throughout the students' study cycle on a variety of related issues and support and guidance provided by dedicated staff to a series of issues occurred, even on an everyday basis and ad hoc. Dedicated Counsellor Services and students' pastoral support already exist and function within NUP on a continuous basis.

2. Improvement on resources relevant to qualitative methods could be possible, by extending, for example, the available software with the addition of tools such as nVivo.

Answer: Done, NVivo Plus 12 has been purchased and is in use (invoiced 21.08.2019/CSQUK-007541).

Comment 3. Additional books and updated editions of existing titles should be available to the students. So, EEC is urging the university to expand its library to better support the LLM programs.

Answer: NUP's library Law collection comprises of:

- ✓ 3.000 books (hard copies) available in the library
- ✓ 50.000 books mainly related to International Law
- ✓ 1.5 M scientifique papers, legislative docs, etc.

Additionally, NUP library has FULL access to the following Law Data Banks:

1. Westlaw UK (<https://1.next.westlaw.com/>)

2. Westlaw International

([https://1.next.westlaw.com/browse/home/internationalmaterials?rs=IWLN1.0&vr=3.0&sp=wlnneapolis-1&transitionType=Default&contextData=\(sc.Default\)&bhcp=1](https://1.next.westlaw.com/browse/home/internationalmaterials?rs=IWLN1.0&vr=3.0&sp=wlnneapolis-1&transitionType=Default&contextData=(sc.Default)&bhcp=1))

3. Lexis Nexis Academic (www.nexisuni.com)

4. Sakoulas Online.gr (<https://www.sakkoulas-online.gr/>) , which offers hundreds of books , 600 full law journal editions, 6.000+ studies, 65.000 commented decisions, 66.000 entries of legislation bodies.

5. Proquest (<https://search.proquest.com/search/1621371?accountid=165531>) , with 400,000 law and international law related doctorate theses.

6. Springer (<https://link.springer.com/search?facet-discipline=%22Law%22>)

7. Wiley online (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/topic/browse/000076>)

Wiley(<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/doSearch?AllField=International+and+European+Business+Law>)

8. Taylor and Francis (<https://www.tandfonline.com/topic/4270?target=topic>)
9. Ebsco
10. Oxford University Press
11. Cambridge University Press
12. Emerald

6. Additional for distance learning programmes (*ALL ESG*)

7. Additional for doctoral programmes (*ALL ESG*)

8. Additional for joint programmes (*ALL ESG*)

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Overall, we believe that the programme has lots of promise and that it is both viable and important for the institution's future development. We believe that, as it stands, it is only partially compliant with the Agency's requirements, so some work will be needed. However, we are confident that the institution should be able to meet those requirements by attending to our recommendations. The main points are summarized below.

Streamline the content of the programme to avoid overlaps

Introduce regular review of the content of the programme to strengthen quality

Given that the programme is open to non-lawyers, ensure students become acquainted with foundational concepts & ideas early on, and consider adding a crash-course introduction at the beginning of the programme.

Address the mismatch between the current workload and the ECTS crediting of each course, as the current workload falls short.

Align learning outcomes and weekly teaching goals.

Adjust the teaching workload to allow staff to undertake more research at a higher level.

Increase peer interaction & enhance learning design to accommodate the learning outcomes in the teaching.

We claim that NUP has addressed the issues above and the programme can now be accredited. Details and proof has also been submitted.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Pantelis Sklias	Rector	

Date: 13.12.2019