

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date.

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Open University of Cyprus
The Programme under evaluation is a joint degree with the Hellenic Air Force Academy

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

In Greek:

Joint MSc Ασφάλεια και Άμυνα
(90 ECTS, Εξ Αποστάσεως)

In English:

Joint MSc in Security and Defence
(90 ECTS, Distance Learning)

- **Language(s) of instruction: English**
- **Programme's status: New**
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: N/A

In English: N/A



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 300.1.1/1 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. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 2nd column of each table, the HEI must respond on the following:*
 - *the areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The institution should respond to the EEC comments, in the designated area next each comment. The comments of the EEC should be copied from the EEC report **without any interference** in the content.*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on separate document(s). Each document should be in *.pdf format and named as annex1, annex2, etc.*

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Programme Purpose and Objectives - this section should better reflect the more specific technology/cyber/electronic aspects of the programme. At present, this speaks to the more general field of security and defense rather than the more targeted approach taken in this programme.</p>	<p>The OUC-HAFA MSc programme team would like to thank the EEC team for their constructive comments and suggestions. Although the technological nature of the programme should have been clear from the available courses and their detailed curriculum, the MSc programme team has updated the program purpose and objectives description to also heavily highlight its technological scope (new Programme Purpose and Objectives description provided in document annex1.pdf will replace original content).</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>Whilst the current title of the programme is deemed compliant, the panel did feel that the team were potentially missing out on a wider and more targeted market. Titles that reflected an aspect of cyber or electronic warfare might help to strengthen the proposition.</p>	<p>With respect to the comments about the programme title, the MSc programme team explained to the ECC during the evaluation day the logic about the selection of the current title and why the word cyber or electronic warfare could not be easily used in the title. With respect to the word Cyber, the programme is not only about Cyber and with respect to the word electronic warfare the programme has a relatively small electronic warfare component. The technological nature of the programme should be evident from the provided detailed course curriculum and the updated Purpose and Objectives description. It is also understood, that after the explanation provided by the MSc programme team to EEC during the evaluation day, and by the written provided comments of the ECC, that the ECC does not expect the title to change.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

<p>It would be helpful to see a mapping of the programme learning outcomes mapped to modules in order to help identify how modules contribute towards the overall programme. This will also be a useful aid for managing the programme in the future to ensure the team understand the impact of module changes on the programme learning outcomes.</p>	<p>With respect to the mapping of the programme learning outcomes to the modules itself, although the mapping of learning outcomes to modules can be derived from the individual module learning outcomes, the MSc programme team will also provide a mapping of learning outcomes to multiple modules (since this case also applies to the programme structure) on the programme website to potential students, so they can easily map learning outcomes to modules through a single reference document . This mapping has been carried out and provided for reference in document annex1.pdf</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

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<p>It is important to find ways to strengthen the interaction and the communication between students. One way to do that is to make the dialog between students into something that feels necessary and normal for them. For example, by introducing the method of peer-reviewing for thesis opposition, group-based assessment or for several individual projects in the modules.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for all the positive feedback about the novelty, uniqueness and importance of the tools and platforms that we have developed in-house and support our learning processes. As described to the EEC, these platforms are interactive and can also support group exercises since in many exercises students are grouped in teams and they need to collaborate between them to achieve certain tasks (e.g. Blue team VS Red team). The MSc programme committee understands that on top of these tools and platforms the EEC recommends we also create exercises where students can oppose and challenge each other’s work to create even more interaction. The MSc programme committee will further facilitate interaction where students (Blue or Red team) will challenge the actions of the “opposition” during forum discussions.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>That The institution clearly places great emphasis on student feedback. This is taken seriously and the faculty respond to feedback. The panel finds the programme to be compliant in this regard. One suggestion from the panel – based on recent experience in the UK – was that the institution might consider ‘closing the loop’ on student feedback by letting the students know about the positive changes that faculty have made in response to feedback. We acknowledge this is a suggestion that goes beyond the programme review, but it is something that could contribute to student satisfaction.</p>	<p>The MSc programme team would like to thank the ECC for the positive and constructive feedback.</p> <p>Indeed, the University gathers student feedback, and informs the Programmes of Study accordingly. There is yet no process to ‘close the loop’ by informing students about changes made as per their feedback. The OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee will discuss ways of implementing relevant mechanisms and procedures at university level across all academic programmes.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>
<p>The teaching team could consider including guest speaker on the programme. The programme team is very well connected with policymakers (nationally and internationally) and the private sector. There are unique perspectives that these groups could offer to enhance the student experience.</p>	<p>The MSc programme team will plan so guest speakers will be invited to provide various talks to programme participants. The close collaborations of the two organisations, OUC & HAFA, with government agencies like the Digital Security Authority, Ministries of Defence, other Defence and Security academies and the European Security and Defence College - where both OUC and HAFA are network members, and the programme coordinator chairs the Cybersecurity configuration group - will ensure that experts and distinguished speakers can be invited to the MSc programme. Moreover, the Programme will ‘use’ the Erasmus+ Programme to invite guest lecturers from EU and non-EU countries to implement teaching assignments of short duration.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>While we understand that relevant professional experience is handled on a case-by-case basis, and there are good reasons for that, it might be worthwhile thinking about a lightly formalized conversion matrix between professional experience and academic qualification. For example a matrix explaining which type of job titles/work responsibilities/duration of employment <i>are more likely</i> to be recognized as equivalent to a formal education. This would not remove the case-by-case assessment and the final academic oversight, but it could provide potential applicants with more information about whether the programme is a good fit for them. The above remark is far from being a critical issue and is only meant as food for thought in order to further increase transparency for prospective students.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for their constructive feedback. With respect to “lightly formalized conversion matrix between professional experience and academic qualification” and “a matrix explaining which type of job titles/work responsibilities/duration of employment are more likely to be recognized as equivalent to a formal education”.</p> <p>The admission requirements for the Joint MSc in Security and Defence are published online and are available to all applicants beforehand. Perspective students must meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Have an undergraduate degree in a relevant area, (e.g Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Networks Engineering) from a recognised university · Proven proficiency in English language: All candidates need to demonstrate that they meet the University’s English language requirements by submitting the relevant certificates along with their application (minimum grade IELTS 5.5 or any other equivalent) · Adequate computer skills so that they can meet the educational requirements of the programme. <p>The above requirements are the typical admission requirements that apply at university level for all English courses.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>Although multiple up-to-date tools support the delivery of the courses and multiple efforts are made to encourage student interaction, e.g. through an introductory activity on the forums, students felt like their interaction with others was very limited and perhaps greater efforts could be made to help students form a community. A simple way to achieve that, would be by assigning more group projects.</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for its feedback. The students present in the evaluation were students from other university programmes. This is a new MSc programme and the provided student feedback, practically does not reflect the students' experience in this programme. Nevertheless, and as stated in section 2 above, the MSc programme committee plans to implement more group projects in this new MSc as explained in section 2 above.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



6. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
none	-	Choose level of compliance:

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
<p>The Committee was impressed by the programme under review. This unique collaboration between the Open University Cyprus and the Hellenic Air Force Academy has significant potential to develop as an internationally recognised programme dealing with contemporary security issues in areas of critical importance, including cyber security and telecommunications. The programme design represents a carefully thought-out collaboration between academics at both institutions and it is evident that the blend of perspectives and expertise that the respective academics bring will benefit students. The mix of military and civilian perspectives is also a real asset.</p> <p>With regard to programme resources and student engagement, the Review Committee was impressed by the innovative, in-house tools developed by the programme team. These include the cyber range and the cyber escape room, both tools that allow students to engage with real-world issues in a safe, simulated environment.</p> <p>The Review Committee was also impressed with the commitment to student support. The institutional structures surrounding the programme mean that students have access to extensive resources, from learning materials to counselling support.</p> <p>On the whole, the Review Committee agrees that this</p>	<p>We would like to thank the ECC for all their positive and constructive conversations and feedback.</p>	<p>Choose level of compliance:</p>



programme is a worthy addition to the portfolios of these institutions and represents a valuable joint venture.		
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Professor Stavros Stavrou	Academic Programme Coordinator	
Professor Vayos Liapis	OUC Vice Rector, Head of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee	
Professor Yannis Manolopoulos	Dean of the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee	
Associate Professor Vayia Karaiskou	Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee, Representative of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	
Assistant Professor Antonios Kafa	Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee, Representative of the Faculty of Economics and Management	
Ms Elena Gregoriou	Head of the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Services, Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee	
Ms Erato Ioanna Sarri	Coordinating Officer of the Rectorate, Quality Assurance Office, Member of the OUC Internal Quality Assurance Committee	

Date: 29/2/2024

