Αρ. Φακ.: 01.10.005

04 Μαρτίου 2022

Καθηγήτρια Μαίρη Ιωαννίδου-Κουτσελίνη
Πρόεδρο Φορέα Διασφάλισης και Πιστοποίησης της Ποιότητας
Λεωφόρος Λεμεσού 5,
2112 Λευκωσία

Αγαπητή κα. Ιωαννίδου-Κουτσελίνη,

ΘΕΜΑ: Απαντητική Έκθεση στα σχόλια της Εξωτερικής Επιτροπής Αξιολόγησης για την αίτηση «Msc in Interacrtion Design» (2 academic years, 120 ECTS)

Με την παρούσα επιστολή επιθυμούμε να εκφράσουμε τις θερμές μας ευχαριστίες στα μέλη της Εξωτερικής Επιτροπής Αξιολόγησης, για την ευγενική τους διάθεση να συμμετάσχουν στη διαδικασία εξωτερικής αξιολόγησης του προγράμματος σπουδών «Msc in Interaction Design» του Τμήματος Πολυμέσων και Γραφικών Τεχνών το οποίο προσφέρεται σε συνεργασία με το Tallinn University Estonia.

Ιδιαίτερα ευχαριστούμε τα μέλη της Επιτροπής, για την ουσιαστική τους συμβολή μέσω των εισηγήσεων τους προς το Τμήμα Πολυμέσων και Γραφικών Τεχνών και το Tallinn University, σε σχέση με την διαμόρφωση του περιεχομένου του εν λόγω προγράμματος σπουδών.

Επισυνάπτεται η σχετική απαντητική έκθεση, επί των παρατηρήσεων / σχολίων που έχουν καταγραφεί στην Έκθεση Εξωτερικής Αξιολόγησης.

Παραμένουμε στη διάθεση σας για οποιεσδήποτε περαιτέρω διευκρινίσεις χρειαστείτε.

Με εκτίμηση,

Καθηγητής Παντελής Κελίρης
Αντιπρύτανης Ακαδημαϊκών Υποθέσεων
Τεχνολογικό Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου

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Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date.

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  Cyprus University of Technology – Tallinn University

- **Town: Limassol**

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

  In Greek:

  Σχεδιασμός Διάδρασης (2 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 120 ECTS, Μάστερ (MSc))

  In English:

  Interaction Design (2 academic years, 120 ECTS, Master (MSc))

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

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

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

  - *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)

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- The EEC concluded that the policy for quality assurance has an appropriately formal status and is publicly available.
- The establishment of a specific Office for Quality Assurance that periodically reviews the changing needs of the Master to ensure they are in line with the needs of the society provides a substantial benefit to the programme.
- Information related to student admission criteria, courses learning outcomes, teaching, and learning processes, and marking procedures, are publicly and readily accessible.
- The view of the EEC is that information regarding student acceptance into the programme, student progression, and student satisfaction is regularly collected and is effectively managed.
- The programme provides good library and computing (software) facilities for the students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations with HEI Responses

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- Considering the large number of part time students and the large drop-out rate, the EEC believes it could be useful to improve the current mitigating policies in case of delays in courses obligations, to possibly reduce the high dropout rate. The currently implemented process of enabling students to apply for "academic leave" and allow them to complete the master in four years might not be sufficient. Perhaps more flexibility with regards to the completion deadline is needed.

  The HEI institutions have decided to take further actions to reduce the drop-out rate in accordance to the committee's recommendations. These include ability for students to take a semester-long academic leave twice during their studies without affecting the maximum 8 term study duration. The study duration maximum (2 x full-time study period) is set by law and cannot be changed. However, the HEI institutions will now consider provisions for offering micro-degrees that will allow prospective students that wish to benefit from Interaction Design education but do not have time or perseverance to complete the full MSc gaining part of the learnings and a micro-degree instead. This alternative offer will in turn reduce potential drop-outs by funneling them through this alternative route instead. Additionally, interviewing applicants that has been implemented since September 2020 has had significant impact on reducing drop-outs as this allowed students to understand clearly the workload and expectations before admission (only 2/54 students admitted since September 2020 dropped out, 3.7%). The previously higher statistics on drop-outs abnormally include students that have paid the first semester's administrative fee but never appeared on class and were automatically dematriculated at certain point.

- The use of learning analytics tools could help to identify the possible causes of the high dropoutrate.Currently learning analytics technologies are not being used in the Programme. Yet, given the large use of online tools, their use should not be too difficult to implement.

  The HEI institutions will train the academic curriculum coordinators in using Google Classroom Learning Analytics. The following metrics are available: Weekly active users, The number of 14-day active classes, the number of courses created, the number of posts developed by educators and learners, for individual users, the number of classes created, posts created, and last active time in Classroom. This will also help catch students that have shown reduced motivation and activity and potentially are a drop-out risk and allow for pastoral support and apply mitigation policies that can help them progress successfully through their studies.

- The EEC suggests replacing the Master Thesis Seminar with some other project-based course, perhaps a "minor master thesis project", as opposed to the Master thesis, in which the student could practice what he/she learned in some other large (but smaller than the Master thesis) project

  The HEI institution takes on board the comment of the EEC and wishes to highlight that a project-based minor thesis project already exists: the Interaction Design Project course. However, there are vaild concerns expressed by the EEC and the Master Thesis Seminar course will expand its material and content to include smaller than the Master thesis minor projects that will help students build capacities and skills that can help them undertake successfully the Masters Thesis (without working on the Masters Thesis itself during the Masters Thesis Seminar) as per the EEC recommendation.

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

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- Very clear student-centred approach to the design and development of this interdisciplinary programme, with clear rationale and relevance/interest to a large international student market.
- There is significant potential for fostering deep and authentic student experiences with an international cohort from a wide range of academic background and professional practice.

Areas of improvement and recommendations with HEI Responses

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- All modules seem to have the same generic short description under the "Teaching Methodology" heading. We recommend enhancing this description by providing some additional content on the specific methods that teachers employ in each module.

  We have now provided detailed descriptions of the teaching methodology along with other information about each course in each module's syllabus and provided an account on the additional content and method. This is available publicly on the website of the MSc by clicking on the heading of each course https://www.idmaster.eu/course-structure-2/

- Ensure that students are exposed to and are able to fully engage with a broad range of real- world scenarios and authentic assessment approaches during their study.

  The instructors will all include further case-studies of real-world scenarios as part of the content of the courses as well as enhanced authentic assessment approaches. These suggestions are in-keeping with the as described pedagogical philosophy and we feel this is a great recommendation that enhances the student learning experience and have been encouraging and monitoring through student feedback on a course-by-course basis.

- Consider the provision for targeted support and early intervention for international student cohort with diverse academic and industrial background, especially in the early stages of the programme.

  Leveraging learning analytics as suggested earlier by the EEC with clear contact points for students where they can receive pastoral support (Andreas Papallas & Sonia Sousa for academic matters, Elena Stavrinidou and Kristi Oikimus for administrative matters) ensures targeted support and early intervention. Additionally, compulsory induction (as suggested in a later comment) and further cultivating the online learning community environment (through Slack) will additionally ensure further support in the early stages of the programme.

3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- Permanent and adjunct faculty are appropriately and well qualified for both research and teaching in the area
- Motivation and cohesion of the teaching staff towards the objectives of the programme and delivering a high quality learning experience

Areas of improvement and recommendations with HEI Responses

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Consider offering more continuous technical support and assistance to teaching staff for the production of audio-visual teaching materials.

HEI will allocate technical support and assistance resources to the teaching staff for production of audio-visual teaching materials. Specifically, the Cyprus University of Technology will offer use of personnel and facilities of CUTing Edge http://cutingedge.cut.ac.cy/ it's media production arm and Tallinn University of Technology. Tallinn University has a e-learning Centre, that will provide individual counselling workshop, training and multimedia services to the benefit of the teaching staff of the programme: https://www.tlu.ee/en/elearningcentre

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

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- The student admission process is transparent and implemented in a consistent manner.
- Information regarding student admission, progression in the programme and graduation is available to the applicants and admitted students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations *with HEI Responses*

> *A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

> Even though the programme has a process in place for measuring the performance of students on a per course basis, adopting a more structured and detailed annual monitoring student progression approach (from the moment of admitting students to their exit or graduation) would help identify more factual insights and lead to improvement regarding student drop-out rates in the programme.

> Detailed analysis of student progression for current and previous students will take place to inform the next Joint Council Meeting in order to identify factual insights leading to improvements regarding student drop-out rates (see also comments in previous section regarding student drop-out rates). In addition, the Student Services of Tallinn University will monitor student progression annually and produce a student progression report that will be submitted to the Joint Council for relevant decision making.

5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- The staff support functions led by academics and administrators seem to work well and there are professional and academic development support activities in place for staff with appropriate breadth (a significant number of CPD seminars on pedagogical and learning technology aspects are offered yearly to staff of the university).
- The use of a variety of formative and summative assessment formats as a dominant model rather than end of term exams is commendable in the distance learning delivery.
- Online learning design conforms to accessibility requirements (designed taking students with special needs into account).

Areas of improvement and recommendations with HEI Responses

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- We recommend that the induction in the online environment becomes compulsory for all students as this will help to address learning support needs during the student journey. In addition it may have a positive impact on progression and retention.

  The induction has now become compulsory for all students.

- We recommend that the experience of the students as far as student access to library materials from both partners becomes seamless by the provision of an appropriate uniform interface (dashboard) that does not make a distinction in relation to the provenance of resources from each partner (a search aggregator might be a solution).

  The EEC will look into possible options for a single library portal that aggregates library information from the two institutions. If this is not possible then the course website will offer direct links to the two library portals making it the first access point for library resources as well as the google classroom environment.

- We recommend that staff professional development around distance and online learning (including webinars) is offered as a structured professional accreditation programme (basically a licence to teach in an online/distance environment which can also be used for ca purposes). This can further increase motivation in attending and participating in such events. A microcredentials approach to motivate and encourage staff to participate in professional development could be helpful there. In addition, it would be useful to offer these sessions to teaching staff from both institutions, overcoming any language barriers (if any) via subtitles etc).

  The Cyprus University of Technology has been offering since 2020 through its newly founded Learning Development Network http://ldn.cut.ac.cy/ teaching resources and

support through webinars, training and one-on-one mentoring. Both institutions will look for appropriate credentials, in the absence of standarised national HE teaching certificates similar to the UK, through microcourses or microdegrees and incentivize teaching staff in attending these by offering to cover the costs. Some staff in the past has completed such courses with success reflecting in the improvement of the course material and curriculum (i.e the Higher Education Teaching certificate by Harvard's University Derek Bok Center taken online).

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
   (ALL ESG)

Click or tap here to enter text.

7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

- This is a strong partnership between two established HE institutions that has a positive impact on the internationalisation of both partners.
- Both universities and collaborating departments have an active research culture from which students of the programme can benefit. There are agreements in place that support this approach, e.g. publications resulting from the programme such as Master's theses, manuscripts of conference papers and journal articles, etc. which are stored in the partners' institutional repositories with open access.
- The partnership has also addressed the issue of sharing data of students and employees by processing these data in accordance with the requirements for data protection published at their websites. This is important in an international agreement of this type.

Areas of improvement and recommendations with HEI Responses

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The programme could benefit further from the collaboration and synergies as far as student support is concerned. This could be achieved by:

(a) enhancing further consistency between all the components of the programme, including administrative and e-learning support in order to offer a uniform learning experience for all students of the programme;

(b) offering additional support, infrastructure and flexibility to make sure that students benefit further from the partnership. For instance: benefitting from joint research culture and activities of the partner institutions; making sure that international mobility for placements or internships does not disadvantage some students because of their professional constraints.

The HEI institutions have also identified the need to enhance the synergies between the administrative, e-learning support and teaching and have already allocated resources to realise physical visits to the two institutions so the teams can meet in person and discuss ways to offer additional support and infrastructure ensuring that students can benefit further from this partnership. A visit from Tallinn University to the Cyprus University of Technology has taken place in November 2021 and another visit is due to take place in April 2022. Following these meetings actions are agreed towards enhancing synergies and improving the student experience. Options for international mobility, placements and internships are continuously being improved through offering options for both part-time and full-time students acknowledging that many of them can also be in part-time or full-time employment.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The HEI institutions and coordinators of the MSc Interaction Design would like to express their appreciation to the members of the EEC panel and Mrs Natasa Kazakaiou on behalf of the CYQAA for facilitating a very rewarding and beneficial accreditation online visit. We have taken on board all the comments of the EEC and have provided responses in how we have done so in the previous sections.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Panayiotis Zaphiris	Rector, Programme Coordinator	
Andreas Papallas	Curriculum Coordinator	
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: 08/03/2022