

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 01/06/2021

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Frederick University
- **Town:** Limassol
- **School:** Business and Law
- **Department:** Maritime Transport and Commerce
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme

In Greek:

Διεθνές Εμπόριο και Ναυτιλιακή Διοίκηση (3 ακαδημαϊκά
εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ (MSc))

In English:

International Trade and Shipping Management (3
academic semesters, 90 ECTS,

Master (MSc)

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.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department 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. 300.3.1).*
- *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, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1.a. The committee observed that the intake of the own BSc students into the MSc is limited. Nevertheless, the BSc students should be a relevant stream in the intake of the MSc program, even if this is after a few years in the industry.

It is noted that a total of 18 masters graduates were our own BSc graduates. Taking the total graduates of our MSc until now, conventional as well as distance learning, this number approximates to 20% of the total number of graduates. The Department has been focusing on the promotion of the MSc programme in order to secure a more diverse student body, with the highest possible academic achievement, while, at the same time, encouraging our top graduates to apply. We accept that the percentage of MSc population from fresh graduates of the BSc is low but this is attributed to a significant extent to the high employability rates of our BSc graduates, making most preferring direct employment than furthering their studies.

1.b. The committee would also like to point out that the viability and potential of the MSc program will be greatly enhanced with the increase in the research content. After all, this is an MSc degree and the research part should be at the core of the curriculum. This will also enhance the skillset of graduates and will enable them to progress to higher level managerial positions.

Emphasis is given to the active involvement and contribution of students to research, to a greater degree than hitherto. The establishment of the Research unit of the Department and the appointment of the currently employed research coordinator as well as the full subscription to the Clarkson's database are seen as vital to enhance the effort of strengthening the research component of the programme and giving further attention to student's dissertations. Furthermore, a clear guidance and tracked goal setting towards presenting research work from MSc theses in local and international conferences will boost the research culture in Department.

In addition to physical resources improvements, maybe more importantly, is the provision of an improved environment in relation to human resources. The Department has raised the

issue with the management and a series of university-wide measures has been suggested to further improve the research culture and output. These measures include:

- The establishment of an internal research funding scheme to support and kickstart research initiative, especially by newly employed and relatively low research engagement academic staff
- A teaching load reduction scheme for faculty that engage in research and produce high-impact research publications and/or engage in funded research projects
- Increase of research account funds to all faculty for participation in conferences and research networking events

In addition to the above measures that apply to all departments, the following additional measures have been suggested:

- Employment of promising alumni with interest in research for supporting research work
- Approval of budget for a senior visiting professor scheme that will allow experienced professors from established universities to take residency for a period (usually during the sabbatical) at the Department in order to seed research activities

1.c. Finally, the learning outcomes in the module specifications need to be streamlined and modified to reflect the learnings objectives of an MSc degree. It is recommended to revise the entire structure of intended learning outcomes for the program as a whole and all the underlying courses, stick to a hierarchical taxonomy, and reduce the number of ILOs overall.

The Department adopts the recommendations of the EEC. Please refer to **Annex 1** for the revised coursed descriptions.

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

All areas marked as compliant

Areas of improvement and recommendations

2.a. The committee recommends giving a greater role to the research that is carried out by students in their theses. Various teaching faculty have indicated they use some of this material in their classes, but this has an informal character. We recommend that the course management team provides an annual review of thesis topics and research results achieved in MSc thesis projects that should be made available at Departmental level.

In response to recommendations in this section, the intent of the Department is to monitor and depict the current trends in shipping research so that the annual review of thesis topics, which takes place periodically, is updated and disseminated to MSc students. A formal mechanism is employed to monitor research results and opportunities for academic publication of students and their supervisors. Currently, the research themes addressed at the latest available IAME conference have been used to review new topics, which supervisors are to evaluate and involve students via the Dpt.'s dissertation module.

Much emphasis is given on the access of students to specialized shipping databases, such as the Clarkson's database, that it is available to all. Subscription to a further dedicated maritime databank (Tradeviews) has also been made and will become available from the current academic year. A plan is in place to create a formal mechanism for informing, disseminating, allocating and evaluating contemporary research topics to MSc Students. Also, specifying the presentation of theses in academic conferences as a performance indicator to be tracked by the Department will boost focus and output to this end.



3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 3.a. For the MSc we recommend that teaching staff develops a more structured approach to integrate their research into teaching, as well as the research activities of students. This is not aimed at developing a separate research effort, but a departmental research strategy that supports the teaching (and the industry) in the short- and long-term.

The Department has, as a first step, communicated and encouraged the joint effort of Faculty in developing a more structured approach, such that research is integrated into their teaching. To facilitate this a research strategy encompassing the steps outlined in Sections 1 and 2 as well as the design of a long-term strategy that will formalize such efforts, are a high priority in the Department's strategic plan.



4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

All areas marked as compliant

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 4.a. The review of information and material provided in relation to the MSc program, as well as the interviews conducted during the visit, did not result in suggestions for improvement in this area.

We would like to thank the committee for their positive remarks.



5. Learning resources and student support

All areas marked as compliant

Areas of improvement and recommendations

5.a. While the university facilities and student support services are at an excellent level, it may be worthwhile to consider how research carried out by faculty members in the Department may be better integrated into the programme.

Please refer to answer 3a.

6. Conclusions and final remarks

The External Evaluation Committee would like to re-iterate a number of positive points that came out of this review. In particular, the following aspects are points of strength on which the Course management team should build upon further in order to guarantee future growth and success:

- An experienced academic team with strong links with the local shipping and business communities
- Courses that are well organised and are attuned to the needs and requirements of the local market thus providing students with solid practical skills.
- Strong links with the local shipping and finance clusters that enhances the employment prospects of graduates.
- Good administrative support (student affairs, IT, Library personnel).
- One should also comment on the transition from traditional, face-to-face delivery, to a remote learning environment during the recent pandemic. To a large extent, the courses were able to utilise the existing resources of the online course so as to offer a seamless transition to an online learning environment.

At the same time, the learning outcomes in the module specifications need to be streamlined and modified to reflect the learnings objectives of an MSc degree. It is recommended to revise the entire structure of intended learning outcomes for the program as a whole and all the underlying courses, stick to a hierarchical taxonomy, and reduce the number of ILOs overall. For the BSc course in particular, it appears that there are too many ILOs which creates challenges in module delivery and assessment.

In addition, the absence of a research culture and lack of a clearly defined research agenda is something that the courses need to address in order to maintain their competitiveness.

Finally, the fact a number of experienced visiting faculty are going to retire over the next few years will also affect the courses. The management team must draw alternative plans by drawing upon the expertise of industry contacts and alumni.



Firstly, we would like to sincerely thank the External Evaluation Committee for their hard work, the constructive discussions held during the virtual visit, and the valuable recommendations made for improving our proposed program.

In relation to the recommendations made by the EEC, we believe we have taken the necessary actions and have fully adopted them, as evident from our responses in sections 1 to 5 of this response.

We are looking forward to the positive decision by the Cyprus QAA and are eager to commence running the program from the coming academic year.



B. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
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Prof. George Demosthenous

Rector

