ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 05/04/2024

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  University of Limassol

- **Town: Limassol**

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

  In Greek:

  Μεταπτυχιακό στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων, 90

  ECTS, 18 μήνες, εξ αποστάσεως

  In English:

  Master in Business Administration, 90 ECTS, 18

  months, distance learning

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

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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
Area of Improvement: Some of the alumni of the programme suggested there is scope for the University to play a more active role in enabling future job opportunities after the programme and exposure to companied and employees during the programme itself.	The UoL Careers Office provides various career-related services to students as well as to our alumni. Currently any job opportunities are announced to the students through the student intranet portal. A new staff member has also been appointed as the Student Wlefare Officer on March 1st 2024. Students and graduates can also contact the careers office for CV building, interview tips and other related topics. Following the launch of the new website, and the new ERP system, there will be a separate section for the Careers, Erasmus, Alumni and Counselling services offered to our students and alumni, which will make all these opportunities more visible.	Choose level of compliance:
Area of Improvement: The demands of converting existing course materials and pedagogical practices into e-learning environments is considerable. It is important that such conversion and translation processes are undertaken with care and thought and informed by best practices in the arena of distance taught provision.	Thank you for emphasizing the importance of thoughtful and best-practice-driven conversion of course materials and pedagogical practices for e-learning environments. We fully acknowledge the complexity of this transition and are committed to ensuring our processes are both meticulous and informed by the latest in distance education methodologies. Our dedicated team works closely with instructional design experts to ensure that our e-learning provision is not only a translation of our conventional content but is also enhanced and optimized for online learning, reflecting best practices in the field. As discussed in the meeting with the EEC, UoL's Distance Learning Unit is implementing a project dedicated to assisting all UoL academics teaching distance learning courses in preparing and enhancing their	Choose level of compliance:

	course design and delivery for their distance learning courses and in converting existing course materials and pedagogical practices into eLearning material, ultimately improving student learning and satisfaction. Through purposeful utilization of digital tools, including innovative applications of generative AI, the project seeks to equip instructors with the requisite skills and expertise to navigate the complexities of distance learning education. By fostering the development of digital readiness and proficiency, this initiative empowers UoL instructors to craft engaging and adaptive eLearning experiences that meet the evolving needs of students. Furthermore, the project emphasizes the creation and utilization of digital education content, ensuring its relevance, accessibility, and inclusivity across diverse learning environments. A by-product of the project is a dynamic repository of best practices that guides UoL educators towards effective digital integration. By promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing, this initiative drives the cultivation of digital skills and expertise among stakeholders. Specifically, UoL's Distance Learning Unit, in collaboration with the MBA coordinator, is developing a capacity-building training course, built in the same distance learning mode, following the same approach, and using the same type of eLearning activities that should be produced as a result of the training course. In this course, participants will learn to set eLearning outcomes and create distance learning lesson plans, assessment tasks, eLearning material and activities (some with the use of generative AI), multimedia-production, evaluation	

	rubrics, etc. The course will be offered as a distance learning course where participants will, on one hand, act as students to familiarize themselves with the student experience and, on the other, develop their eLearning distance courses while receiving feedback as they themselves complete the various eLearning activities. This course is **mandatory for all instructors teaching a distance learning course** in the MBA or any other UoL program and will be offered as soon as the distance learning MBA is accredited. At completion of the program, participants will receive a certificate of completion.	

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Area of Improvement: Students need to receive clear institutional guidance and recommendations on the use of AI in assessment, linked directly to university policy/guidance on the use of AI.	The University of Limassol Quality Assurance policy on the Use of Generative AI provides instructors and students with guidance and recommendations on the use of AI. (see Annex 1)	
Area of Improvement: Staff should be supported dealing with academic offences originated by the use of generative AI technologies. Clear institutional guidance, including training on technologies and the redesign of assessments, is necessary.	The University of Limassol Quality Assurance policy on the Use of Generative AI provides instructors and students with guidance and recommendations on the use of AI. (see Annex 1) As discussed in the meeting with the EEC, UoL's Distance Learning Unit is implementing a project dedicated to assisting all UoL academics teaching distance learning courses in preparing and enhancing their course design and delivery for their distance learning courses and in converting existing course materials and pedagogical practices into eLearning material, ultimately improving student learning and satisfaction. Through purposeful utilization of digital tools, including innovative applications of generative AI, the project seeks to equip instructors with the requisite skills and expertise to navigate the complexities of distance learning education. By fostering the development of digital readiness and proficiency, this initiative empowers UoL instructors to craft engaging and adaptive eLearning experiences that meet the evolving needs of students. Furthermore, the project emphasizes the creation and utilization of digital education content, ensuring its relevance, accessibility, and inclusivity across diverse learning environments. A by-product of the project is a dynamic repository of best practices that guides UoL educators towards effective digital integration. By promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing, this	

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Area of Improvement: Building a student community would enhance the student experience and potentially have a positive impact on recruitment. We highlight this as an issue, as it was raised by the students we met from the conventional MBA programme. We note that this brings challenges when dealing with distance learning students. Nonetheless it is important for the University to address this in creative and supportive ways.	We organize and hold orientation days on each campus during the first week of September. During these days, new students can learn about the available resources, connect with their peers, and meet the faculty. We provide this introduction session on a one-to-one basis as well. In addition to the orientation days, the student welfare department in collaboration with the Student Council and the Alumni Association organize various events and workshops for the students. For distance learning students, we recognize the importance of fostering a sense of community and connection despite physical distance. Therefore, we will offer online orientation days specifically tailored to their needs. Additionally, students of each program will be grouped accordingly, and through Moodle and	

	Microsoft Teams, they will have access to dedicated spaces for communication and engagement with their peers, administrators, and faculty members. Furthermore, to address this challenge in creative and supportive ways, we are exploring innovative initiatives such as virtual coffee chats, peer mentoring programs, and themed discussion forums within our online platforms. These initiatives aim to facilitate informal interactions, provide academic and emotional support, and foster a sense of belonging among our distance learning students. By adopting these approaches, we are confident that we can create a vibrant and supportive student community that enhances the overall student experience and positively impacts recruitment efforts.	
Area of Improvement: Embedding tools such as simulations, serious games etc. should create incentives for students to use interactive tools during their MBA journey.	We fully agree with the EEC recommendation. Recognizing the evolving needs and preferences of modern learners, our capacity-building training course for UoL academics emphasizes the importance of creating dynamic and engaging eLearning experiences. Through this course, educators will be equipped with the skills to design and implement a wide range of innovative activities tailored to enhance the MBA journey for distance learners. To successfully engage students, we have carefully selected a wide range of interactive activities for our distance learning courses. With the addition of H5P, our online environment provides an immersive learning experience. These include simulations and serious games. (a) Immersive **simulations** will provide students with hands-on experience in decision-making and problem-solving within realistic business scenarios, enhancing their practical skills and strategic thinking. (b) interactive and engaging **serious games** will offer students an enjoyable yet educational experience, enabling them to apply MBA concepts in simulated environments while fostering critical thinking and decision-making skills. In addition to simulations and serious	

	games, our training program encourages the integration of various other interactive multimedia elements, such as: (c) **interactive films & videos** enable students to take an active role by answering questions associated with the content; (d) **interactive quizzes** to engage students actively while learning and test retention and understanding; (e) **discussion forums** to foster creative collaboration, learning and critical thinking; (f) **gamified assessments** making learning more enjoyable and motivating for students, such as, **fill-in-the-blank tasks** to enhance understanding, **drag-and-drop games** to stimulate practical learning, **crossword puzzles** that provide a pleasant way to reinforce crucial topics, and **word searches** that endorse exploration and language retention; (g) **virtual reality (VR) activities** which allow students to immerse themselves in realistic scenarios; (h) **augmented reality (AR) activities** that blend virtual and physical environments; (i) **collaborative projects and case studies** that involve real-world challenges and encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills development; (j) **multimedia storytelling** enhance content delivery, making complex concepts more accessible and memorable for students. These interactive elements not only encourage active participation, but also adapt to a variety of learning styles, resulting in rich and fulfilling educational journeys for all participants.	
Area of Improvement: Training seminars should be timetabled (and offered periodically during the academic year) to ensure that all staff should be able to attend. Similar provision should also be offered to MBA students in accessible ways.	Thank you for your feedback regarding the importance of training seminars and accessible provisions for both staff and students within our MBA program. We value your recommendations and are pleased to inform you that our Distance Learning Unit already has robust mechanisms in place to address these needs, ensuring both our faculty and students are well-equipped for academic excellence. For our faculty, we schedule two mandatory webinars each academic year, focusing on the development of interactive	

	materials, simulations, and effective use of the Moodle Learning Management System for course creation. These webinars are part of our commitment to enhance teaching effectiveness, particularly in a distance learning context. This approach mirrors the practices established for our conventional programs, adapted to emphasize interactivity and engagement in a virtual learning environment.

Also, our capacity-building training course will be offered three times per year, in the fall and spring semesters as a 16-week distance learning course and in the summer as an 8-week distance learning course. The repository of eLearning material, the eGuides, the complementary training webinars and all instructor resources will be available to distance learning instructors throughout the year. This provides ample opportunities for instructors.

In November 2023, we have also initiated a series of workshops for UoL faculty by the IT department on the use and applications of our Moodle platform.

We have also engaged a distance learning professional from the Open University of London who will provide a kick-off training seminar on distance learning for UoL Faculty in April 2024. This is in addition to external training sessions that our faculty have attended since the last academic year, following the decision of the university to initiate distance learning programs. (Annex 8).

Furthermore, we offer an induction week for our MBA students, designed to familiarize them with our digital platforms, clarify academic scheduling, and provide a comprehensive overview of the student handbook, detailing university policies and regulations. This initiative is supplemented by continuous updates and resources available through our Student Help Centre page on Moodle. Here, students can access a wide range of information, from leveraging online sources responsibly to understanding plagiarism, and acquiring career skills. The distance learning training seminar and resources for MBA students | |

	will be offered throughout their academic studies. Students will have to attend the compulsory training seminar and consultation before beginning their studies, during the induction week, which will take place the month before the beginning of each semester.	
Additional Recommendation: As the programme is new – albeit it builds on a track record of successful conventional provision - we did not see any examples of interaction between students or evidence of how peer learning or group learning is supported in the distance learning context. We observed a conventional class and this provided satisfactory evidence on teaching approaches and adequacy of teaching staff, however work needs to be done to ensure a successful translation into an e-learning context.	We fully recognize the importance of fostering meaningful interaction and collaborative learning experiences in the distance learning MBA program. UoL is deeply committed to promoting student interaction and supporting peer and group learning in our distance learning courses. To achieve this, we are implementing a comprehensive set of strategies and initiatives: Firstly, we are integrating virtual collaboration tools such as discussion forums (Moodle), video conferencing platforms (MS Teams), and instant messaging systems (MS Teams). These tools enable real-time communication and collaboration among students, fostering meaningful discussions, knowledge sharing, and group projects regardless of geographical barriers. We are currently expanding our use of interactive tools within our Moodle platform to facilitate real-time discussions, group projects, and peer feedback sessions. This includes dedicated forums for collaborative learning and scheduled live sessions for group work through MS Teams. The versatility of H5P supports diverse learning styles and helps in maintaining a high level of student engagement and participation. We are committed to informing and training our instructors on the integration and effective use of these tools. Secondly, structured group assignments and projects are an integral part of our curriculum, requiring students to collaborate in solving complex problems, analyzing case studies, and completing real-world tasks. These assignments not only promote peer learning but also cultivate teamwork and communication skills essential for success in today's business environment.	Choose level of compliance:

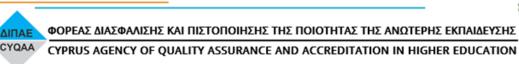|		
	Thirdly, we have implemented peer feedback mechanisms within interactive activities, where students provide constructive feedback on each other's work. Faculty members play a crucial role in facilitating and moderating these sessions to ensure quality and relevance, as these assessments are part of the student evaluation process. Fourthly, we organize virtual networking events, webinars, and online communities where students can connect with their peers, alumni, industry professionals, and faculty members. These initiatives provide valuable networking opportunities, enabling students to exchange ideas, seek mentorship, and build professional relationships beyond the traditional classroom setting. Our instructor training capacity course includes instruction on developing eLearning activities that foster student interaction and leveraging technology to enhance collaborative learning experiences. By implementing these initiatives, we are confident that we will create a vibrant and inclusive learning community in the distance learning MBA program, where students can actively engage with course content, collaborate with their peers, and benefit from meaningful interaction and support throughout their academic journey. We are committed to continuously monitoring and refining our approaches to ensure the successful translation of our proven teaching methods into the eLearning context.	
Additional Recommendation: We were also given access to two courses on the VLE where there was evidence of a consistent structure to support student learning. Clearer signposting and some further explanations on the purpose of these resources and where they fit exactly within the student journey (and set of activities) would be helpful.	Thank you for highlighting these areas. We've already taken steps to address the concerns raised. Clearer signposting and detailed explanations regarding the purpose and alignment of resources within the student journey have been implemented to enhance the learning experience. We believe these improvements will provide students with a more structured and seamless learning environment. We attach as an example the study timeline developed for the MBA	Choose level of compliance:

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	course that the EEC sampled during the accreditation visit. (Annex 2)	
Additional Recommendation: We note the need to accommodate students from different time zones. This also extends to the capacity to access wider student support (e.g. ICT, welfare, online exams, and so on).	The UoL ticketing system allows students to submit a ticket for any of the available services (ICT, welfare, careers etc.), and the relevant officer will address this issue or forward it to the relevant department if needed. Pre-scheduled MS Teams meetings with the Welfare Office, Erasmus Office, Careers Office, or the Library are also widely used by UoL students. These meetings can be arranged to fit the students and the university's time zone. For online exams we have set up a system in Moodle which gives a 24-hour time frame for students to complete the exam. Depending on their time zone they can log in at an hour convenient for them and they will have a 2-hour window during which they will need to complete the exam. They will be monitored with the use of Proctorio software.	Choose level of compliance:
Additional Recommendation: Some of the students thought that the university should allow them further exposure to employment opportunities and placements. This is equally important for the distance learning students.	The UoL Careers Office provides various career-related services to students as well as to our alumni. Currently any job opportunities are announced to the students through the student intranet portal. Students and graduates can also contact the careers office for CV building, interview tips and other related topics. Following the launch of the new website, and the new ERP system, there will be a separate section for the Careers, Erasmus, Alumni and Counselling services offered to our students and alumni, which will make all these opportunities more visible.	Choose level of compliance:
Additional Recommendation: There does not appear to be a guide for DL staff, and we suggest that producing one would now be particularly useful. In our discussions, the EEC was informed that a guide in electronic format was still in preparation. There are instructor resources on Moodle, but we feel that these require some further development for the DL MBA. At present these seem to be focusing on technical support rather	Based on the EEC comment, and as discussed during the visit, the **UoL Distance Learning Instructor and Staff Guide** (Annex 3) was finalized and approved. The Guide includes the formulation of our pedagogical model for e-learning, aligned with the overarching vision and objectives of the UoL Distance Learning Unit. To ensure comprehensive development, we have referred to the standards and directives outlined by various quality assurance bodies and agencies (CYQAA, ENQA, ESG, EADTU).	Choose level of compliance:

than the pedagogical development of MBA teaching staff.	The purpose of this guide is to provide UoL instructors of distance learning programs and staff with a comprehensive resource to enhance their understanding of online teaching methods and best practices. It aims to equip UoL Distance Learning instructors with the knowledge, tools, and strategies necessary to create engaging, effective, and inclusive Distance Learning experiences for UoL students. Distance learning is a fast-evolving set of instructional methods. We prioritize staying current with the latest developments in quality assurance frameworks to ensure the continued relevance and effectiveness of our e-learning pedagogical model. As new DL technologies and methods become available and are incorporated by the UoL DL Unit, this Guide will be updated accordingly. In a collaborative project with 7 other institutions in 6 countries, UoL is conducting a comprehensive review of relevant literature and existing pedagogical approaches across participating institutions, as well as leading programs from non-participating institutions. This involves collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing context-specific information on (1) innovative pedagogical eLearning methods and practices in the relevant literature, across the participating institutions, and from selected leading eLearning programs from non-participating institutions; (2) current trends in generative artificial intelligence and its applications in education to understand its potential impact on teaching and learning processes; (3) innovative pedagogical methods and practices that integrate or leverage AI technologies within the context of higher education. The ultimate objective is to prepare an eGuide outlining the method and steps that need to be taken when developing generative-AI-enhanced, pedagogically-innovative eLearning tools and material for distance learning courses. UoL staff will have access to this material and the additional eGuide as well.	

Additional Recommendation: The university does not seem to have a policy or guidance for the use of AI for members of staff and students.	The UoL Senate approved the **QA policy on guidance for the use of AI** during it meeting held on the 14th of March. The Policy can be found in Annex 1	Choose level of compliance:
Additional Recommendation: Regarding the assessment framework for distance learning, we understand that distance learning special provisions, particularly in relation to enhanced assessment methodologies and policies for distance learning, are currently being finalised. We are told that it will be approved soon by the QA committee before being submitted to the senate.	Based on the EEC constructive comment, and as discussed during the visit, to ensure the quality and effectiveness of our distance learning programs, the **UoL Distance Learning Assessment framework** (Annex 4) was finalized and approved. Following CYQAA regulations, the document provides useful information about the assessment framework, the criteria, and activities that assess student performance in an online course and aims to guide instructors within the UoL DL Unit to design, implement, and evaluate assessments effectively. By adhering to these criteria and incorporating diverse assessment activities, we can ensure the quality, integrity, and accessibility of our distance learning programs, ultimately enhancing the learning experience for all students.	Choose level of compliance:

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3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Area of Improvement: The EEC feels that the faculty must be more active with respect to Erasmus+ activities. Faculty must be encouraged to participate in the mobility programs as theses enhance the building of research networks and collaborations in all academic aspects such as teaching, research, etc.	UoL faculty do participate in Key Action 1 (KA1) exchanges for research and teaching and their participation will increase as more short-term Erasmus+ agreements are reached with other participating universities. This is part of the 2024 internationalization strategy of the university. Currently, UoL has 16 active Erasmus+ agreements in 8 European countries. The faculty's involvement in Erasmus+ activities, specifically in Key Action 2 (KA2): Cooperation Partnership proposals, has been notable. Under the coordination of the UoL Research Center, March 2023 marked UoL's participation in 6 KA2 proposal submissions, with half being successfully awarded. These projects are inherently transnational, necessitating collaboration with European partners for research, teaching, and training initiatives. Following the Research Center's information sessions and training, there was a significant increase in Faculty participation in the next round of Erasmus+ KA2 submissions in March 2024. Faculty members took active roles in the development and submission of 16 proposals, indicating a growing capacity and commitment to engaging in transnational, interdisciplinary projects. UoL faculty also have the opportunity to participate in research and teaching exchanges at non-Erasmus+ universities with which we have agreements. Currently, UoL has 10 active non-Erasmus+ agreements in 8 countries.	Choose level of compliance:
Area of Improvement: Promotion criteria must be more transparent and achievable. There must be a clear guide to what are the time, teaching, and research expectations for advancing in their careers within the UoL.	The promotion criteria are clearly stated in the UoL Charter, the Faculty Handbook and the individual Faculty contracts and they are outlined in the attached **UoL TENURE SYSTEM OF FACULTY RECRUITMENT, EVALUATION AND PROMOTION** (Annex 5). The workload allocation and the weights given to teaching, research, service and community outreach are explicitly stated in the contract of each faculty member and performance is annually evaluated based on the point system. Both	Choose level of compliance:

	quantitative and qualitative criteria and quality criteria are considered in annual evaluations; see for example the attached **UoL Policy on Faculty Research** (Annex 6) on how the point system is applied in the evaluation of research. Additional information on the criteria for promotion of faculty can be found in Annex 6a.	
Area of Improvement: Although research was discussed a lot in our meeting as an important and integral part of the university activities, there is much that can be done to enhance and support research. For example, the university or the relevant departments can establish a series of weekly or monthly seminars where UoL's faculty and also researchers and business practitioners from other universities or businesses can present their research or case studies to the faculty and the students of the UoL. This will enhance the research environment within the UoL, strengthen the collaborations between the faculty members, create links and collaborations with other academic institutions from Cyprus and abroad or relevant businesses and government agencies involved with research. These seminar series can be either in person when the logistics allow it, or even be online. The UoL must encourage the participation of all faculty and graduate students.	UoL does have various active series of research seminars. One is the research seminars with invited speakers. These take place both face-to-face and online based on the preference of the speaker. These are planned at the beginning of the year and take place on three out of the four Thursdays of the month from September to June, on average. The Thursday that we do not have an invited speaker for the research seminar, we have a brown bag lunch where a resident faculty presents her/his work-in-progress to the rest of the faculty. There is also an ad hoc series of research seminars and these take place as part of the recruitment of new faculty. These are scheduled more conveniently around the decision deadline of the academic positions to be filled. The abovementioned seminars are open to all resident, visiting, and adjunct faculty, as well as, to colleagues from collaborating institutions in Cyprus (if face-to-face) and abroad (if online). The seminars are also open to graduate students, alumni and practitioners who teach in our programs. These seminar series do indeed improve the research environment within UoL, instigate collaborations between UoL faculty members, motivate networking and collaborations with other academic institutions from Cyprus and abroad or collaborations with relevant businesses and government agencies involved with research. In fact, UoL faculty participate in a lot of funded research projects with private business organizations as well as public organizations. Diverse Avenues for Research Funding Acquisition: Beyond Erasmus+, the faculty actively pursues various research funding opportunities, collaborating with local and European institutions. This involves submitting proposals for national funding like the Research and	Choose level of compliance:

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	Innovation Foundation (RIF) and engaging with EU programs such as Horizon Europe. To foster a robust research culture, UoL has implemented several initiatives. These initiatives encompass information days and webinars to elucidate research opportunities, networking events for faculty to connect with potential collaborators from academia and industry (either online or physical), and comprehensive workshops focusing on proposal writing skills. Additionally, faculty members benefit from individualized coaching sessions aimed at enhancing their competency in applying for research funding. These efforts reflect UoL's strategic aim to expand research capacity and enable faculty to contribute effectively to a wide spectrum of collaborative research ventures.	
Area of Improvement: The committee wants to emphasize the importance and value of research-led teaching in a university setting especially in graduate courses. This can be reflected in the everyday practices, such as incorporating peer reviewed journal articles into the learning process and encouraging students to critically reflect on them.	We appreciate the EEC's emphasis on the importance of research-led teaching, and we are pleased to confirm that our graduate courses already integrate these practices into our everyday teaching methodologies. Our curriculum routinely incorporates peer-reviewed journal articles as essential readings, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills among our students. Furthermore, we encourage active engagement with these materials through structured discussions and assignments, enabling students to critically reflect on the latest research findings and apply them to real-world contexts. We remain committed to maintaining and further enhancing the research-led teaching approach across our distance learning MBA courses to ensure the continued academic excellence and professional development of our students.	Choose level of compliance:
Area of Improvement: The teaching staff needs to be officially trained in Distance Learning. The EEC is aware that the Distance Learning unit within the UoL has arranged for relevant seminars to be provided to the teaching staff on a non-mandatory basis. Providing these seminars and all the support necessary for the Distance Learning courses is of course a significant task performed by the DL unit. Nonetheless, the EEC	As discussed in the meeting with the EEC, UoL's Distance Learning Unit is implementing a project dedicated to assisting all UoL academics teaching distance learning courses in preparing and enhancing their course design and delivery for their distance learning courses and in converting existing course materials and pedagogical practices into eLearning material, ultimately improving student learning and satisfaction. Through purposeful utilization of digital tools, including innovative applications of generative AI, the project seeks to equip instructors with the requisite skills and	Choose level of compliance:

believes that the seminars provided by the DL unit may be mandatory for the staff that will teach DL courses. A relevant, concise online series of seminars may be offered by the DL unit that will lead to a DL certification for the successful participants.

Additionally, the DL unit can circulate and set examples of good practices in DL from courses both internally and externally.

Additional Recommendation:

The MBA staff is not yet trained in delivering Distance Learning courses. The programme coordinator and the staff seem to realize that is necessary to get formal training in this area as distance learning presents challenges that are different to traditional teaching methods of delivering a course.

expertise to navigate the complexities of distance learning education. By fostering the development of digital readiness and proficiency, this initiative empowers UoL instructors to craft engaging and adaptive eLearning experiences that meet the evolving needs of students. Furthermore, the project emphasizes the creation and utilization of digital education content, ensuring its relevance, accessibility, and inclusivity across diverse learning environments.

A by-product of the project is a dynamic repository of best practices that guides UoL educators towards effective digital integration. By promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing, this initiative drives the cultivation of digital skills and expertise among stakeholders. Specifically, UoL's Distance Learning Unit, in collaboration with the MBA coordinator, is developing a capacity-building training course, built in the same distance learning mode, following the same approach, and using the same type of eLearning activities that should be produced as a result of the training course. In this course, participants will learn to set eLearning outcomes and create distance learning lesson plans, assessment tasks, eLearning material and activities (some with the use of generative AI), multimedia-production, evaluation rubrics, etc. The course will be offered as a distance learning course where participants will, on one hand, act as students to familiarize themselves with the student experience and, on the other, develop their eLearning distance courses while receiving feedback as they themselves complete the various eLearning activities. This course is **mandatory for all instructors teaching a distance learning course** in the MBA or any other UoL program and will be offered as soon as the distance learning MBA is accredited. At completion of the program, participants will receive a certificate of completion. The intention of the project is in fact to accredit this certification program and offer it to non-UoL participants as well, in the future.

All eLearning material produced by participants in the training and capacity-building course will be collected so as to build

| | a repository of course material to be used as future training material for all academics, instructors, instructional designers, and other eLearning staff at UoL. At the same time, in a collaborative project with 7 other institutions in 6 countries, UoL is conducting a comprehensive review of relevant literature and existing pedagogical approaches across participating institutions, as well as leading programs from non-participating institutions. This involves collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing context-specific information on (1) innovative pedagogical eLearning methods and practices in the relevant literature, across the participating institutions, and from selected leading eLearning programs from non-participating institutions; (2) current trends in generative artificial intelligence and its applications in education to understand its potential impact on teaching and learning processes; (3) innovative pedagogical methods and practices that integrate or leverage AI technologies within the context of higher education. The ultimate objective is to prepare an eGuide outlining the method and steps that need to be taken when developing generative-AI-enhanced, pedagogically-innovative eLearning tools and material for distance learning courses. UoL staff will have access to this material and the eGuide as well. Additionally, UoL has provided a list of online courses and training programs on distance learning offered by other academic institutions. Distance learning instructors are attending courses and training sessions to complement their knowledge and skills. For the same reason, UoL's Distance Learning Unit is preparing a list of webinars that complement the learning gained at the capacity-building training course. The idea is that webinars will inform and train instructors in the use of new and innovative techniques and practical skills not covered by the training course. These include two mandatory webinars each academic year, focusing specifically on the development of interactive materials, simulations, and effective use of the Moodle Learning Management System for course creation. These webinars are part of UoL's commitment to enhance teaching | |

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	effectiveness, particularly in a distance learning context. This approach mirrors the practices established for our conventional programs, adapted to emphasize interactivity and engagement in a virtual learning environment.	
Area of Improvement: The EEC believes that the School Faculty Selection Committee (SFSC) in the process of evaluating and selecting new staff members or in the case of promoting current staff members must include at least one - if not more- external to the UoL academics. This practice is widely used by most internationally recognized universities has many advantages: a) External academics bring fresh perspectives and diverse experiences from other institutions, countries or fields. b) External academics act as independent evaluators and, thus, their presence ensures transparency and fairness in the selection process enhancing the moral, loyalty and job satisfaction of the existing faculty. External academics with no personal connections to the UoL are more likely to assess candidates fairly, without biases or conflicts of interest. This is important and contributes to maintaining high standards of academic excellence and transparency of the whole selection and promotion processes. c) Involving external academics enhances networking opportunities or exchange programs and academic partnerships. d) The credibility and transparency of the processes of the institution are enhanced and aligned with international best practices and standards.	The School Faculty Selection Committee (SFSC), tasked with evaluating and selecting new staff members and promoting current ones, comprises the School Dean (as Chair), the Department Chair, the Discipline/Area Head, and **an equal number of external academics from outside UoL** who have no personal connections to UoL or the candidate. This ensures fair evaluation of candidates, free from biases or conflicts of interest, and safeguards high standards of academic excellence and transparency in the selection and promotion processes. The composition of the SFSC, excluding the Dean and the Department Chair, varies according to the disciplinary area of the candidate. For instance, if the candidate specializes in Educational Leadership, the SFSC will include Brian Howieson (School Dean), Paris Cleanthous (Department Chair), Ioannis Christodoulou (Area Head for Educational Leadership), and three external academics in Educational Leadership. The Chair holds the tie-breaking vote.	Choose level of compliance:

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
Area of Improvement: The committee understands that the need for prior employment experience as an entry requirement for the programme has been removed. (This followed from the withdrawal from the AMBA accreditation). There is a need to continue to assess the pedagogical and experiential impact (for students and faculty) of this policy given the traditional purpose of an MBA. Most often, students' own professional or career experiences act as a source of reflection and focus of analysis during an MBA journey.	Regarding the removal of the prior employment experience requirement for our MBA program, we acknowledge the importance of continuously assessing the pedagogical and experiential impact of this policy change. While it's true that traditional MBA programs often leverage students' professional experiences for reflection and analysis, our program has adapted to accommodate a diverse range of candidates. Currently, our MBA cohort comprises individuals with an average of 9.4 years of work experience, and 97% of our students are employed full-time. Our modular system and flexible scheduling, with evening and Saturday classes, allow students to balance their studies with their professional commitments effectively. We expect this will continue to be the case for our distance learning students. While prior work experience is no longer mandatory, we strongly recommend a minimum of three years' post-bachelor's experience during the admission process. However, we recognize the value of admitting candidates without traditional work experience, such as those with exceptional academic credentials, entrepreneurial aspirations, or family business backgrounds. During the admissions process, candidates without prior work experience undergo thorough interviews to assess their business acumen and readiness for the MBA journey. For those admitted without	Choose level of compliance:

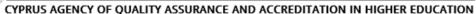|	work experience who are also unemployed, our Career's Office provides dedicated support, resulting in a 100% success rate in securing employment within the first three months of the program. We continuously evaluate the impact of this policy change on both students and faculty to ensure the quality and effectiveness of our MBA program. We firmly believe that embracing a diverse pool of candidates enriches the learning experience for all students and fosters a dynamic and inclusive educational environment.	
Area of Improvement: There may be opportunities to involve MBA alumni in the programme or to introduce placements to provide experience and organisational reference points for students without prior professional or management experience.	We are actively exploring opportunities and engage MBA alumni in our program, offering mentorship, networking events, and guest lectures to provide valuable industry insights and guidance. Additionally, the Career Office leverages the MBA alumni to help with placements or internships to offer practical experience and organizational reference points for students without prior professional or management experience, enhancing their learning journey and preparing them for future career success.	Choose level of compliance:
Area of Improvement: There is a need for robust management of recruitment agencies and to ensure that quality control is maintained.	We conduct a very thorough due diligence process when selecting recruitment agencies whereby we ask the agency to provide us with their basic company information (please find the form attached) so that we can evaluate them and to also provide 2 referees from Higher Education institutions. Then, we contact those 2 referees ourselves and ask them to provide a reference for the agency in order to assess their suitability for us. You can find the reference form attached. If any questions arise from these references, we follow up until we are satisfied that these agents meet our standards.	Choose level of compliance:

	After commencing our collaboration with these recruitment agencies, we organize trainings for them to ensure they are familiar with all our products and course offerings so that quality control is assured from us because those agents will be representing us to students so we aim to supply them with all necessary information to promote us accurately to prospective students. Finally, we review any social media posts by our recruitment agencies to ensure they abide by our guidelines and that quality control is maintained. Overall, we have a very close collaboration with these agencies and we oversee them meticulously to ensure quality control is preserved.	

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
Area of Improvement: An additional facility to support students outside Cyprus who require access to printed copies of books should be available via the university network of collaborations, when there are no digital copies available. There may be potential to establish regional collaborations with libraries (outside of Cyprus) to support geographically dispersed MBA students.	In the rare occasion that MBA reading books do not have digital versions, UoL will ensure that students also receive a valid copy of the material always in compliance with copyright laws. If this does not work, UoL will rely on its library collaborations. UoL currently has a cooperation with the University of Cyprus for the interlibrary loan of books in printed form for its students, which is in the process to be extended to other universities in Europe, where collaborations do not already exist. For the needs of the distance learning MBA program in English and Greek, which will be offered to prospective students both in Greece and in other countries abroad, the UoL Library collaborates with other universities for better dissemination of information to its students so that they can access the printed materials, in the rare occasion when a digital copy is not available. Once the university has mapped the geographical background of the candidates for the new academic year, it will proceed to establish partnerships, where these do not exist. Currently, UoL has established presence in the following countries through various collaborations: **Africa:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo. **Asia:** Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia,	Choose level of compliance:

	Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, Vietnam. **America:** Brazil, Canada, USA. **Europe:** Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, UK. **Oceania:** Australia, New Zealand. Following its internationalization strategy, UoL is proceeding to establish presence through new collaborations in the following countries: **Africa:** Egypt. **Asia:** Iran, Mongolia, Oman, Qatar, South Korea. A similar approach will be followed to establish presence through collaborations if students residing in other countries than the above join the MBA program.	
Area of Improvement: Training and induction for distance learning MBA students on the use of external software tools is needed. At the time of completing this report it was not clear to us how this would be done.	Before the beginning of each course, synchronous introductory sessions and trainings on the software that is used are conducted by either the instructor or the software vendor representatives. Software tutorials are available throughout the course duration to aid the students towards completing their assignments and projects. Furthermore, a UoL DL Student Guide on the use of the Distance learning environment and the VLE has been created. (Annex 7)	Choose level of compliance:
Area of Improvement: There is a need to ensure parity of access to computer labs for distance learning MBA students.	UoL can provide access to computer labs to students where it has established presence through its own offices (Greece and China) or through collaborations. Currently, UoL has established presence in the following countries through various collaborations: **Africa:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali,	Choose level of compliance:

	Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo. **Asia:** Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, Vietnam. **America:** Brazil, Canada, USA. **Europe:** Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, UK. **Oceania:** Australia, New Zealand. Following its internationalization strategy, UoL is proceeding to establish presence through new collaborations in the following countries: **Africa:** Egypt. **Asia:** Iran, Mongolia, Oman, Qatar, South Korea. A similar approach will be followed to establish presence through collaborations if students residing in other countries than the above join the MBA program.	
Additional Recommendation: The programme team provided a list of external software tools to be used for the distance learning MBA. The students from the conventional MBA can benefit from access to computer labs during their studies. This raises the question of how best to replicate this for distance learning MBA students.	All software that is available to face-to-face students is also available to be downloaded and used by distance learning students. Most of the software tools are either free and open source and/or cloud-based, therefore students do not need to use their own hardware to run the software. For the cases of specialized non-cloud software, such as SPSS and STATA, student licenses are provided to all students, regardless of whether they are following distance learning or face-to-face programs. Before the beginning of each course, synchronous introductory sessions and trainings on the software that is used are conducted by either the instructor or the	Choose level of compliance:

	software vendor representatives. Software tutorials are available throughout the course duration to aid the students towards completing their assignments and projects.	

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks **by EEC**	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Provide regular and frequent contact points for students; thoughtfully translate learning resources from the conventional mode of delivery into appropriate and enriching activities for distance learning students; and work to build a sense of student community and connections within the cohort even though the students may be physically dispersed across different locations outside of Cyprus and time zones.	For distance learning students, we recognize the importance of fostering a sense of community and connection despite physical distance. Therefore, we will offer online orientation days specifically tailored to their needs. Additionally, students of each program will be grouped accordingly, and through Moodle and MS Teams, they will have access to dedicated spaces for communication and engagement with their peers, administrators, and faculty members. Furthermore, to address this challenge in creative and supportive ways, we are exploring innovative initiatives such as virtual coffee chats, peer mentoring programs, and themed discussion forums within our online platforms. These initiatives aim to facilitate informal interactions, provide academic and emotional support, and foster a sense of belonging among our distance learning students. By adopting these approaches, we are confident that we can create a vibrant and supportive student community that enhances the overall student experience and positively impacts recruitment efforts.	Choose level of compliance:

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Vasilis Polimenis	Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, Chair	
Andreas Artemiou	Dean of Technology & Innovation School, Vice Chair	
Paris Cleanthous	Chairperson of the Department of Management, Director of MBA and MPSM,	
Lena Jelic	Director of Academic Affairs, Member	
Snezana Eminidou	Director of the BSc Economics, Member	
Afxentis Afxentiou	Academic Research Manager, Member	
Andreas Mathikolonis	President of Student Council, Member	

Date: 05/04/2024