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Date: April 13, 2021

External Evaluation Report

(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
CDA College
- **Town:** Pafos
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** CDA College
- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Business
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In English:

BA (Hons) Business Administration (4y, 240 ECTS, plus optional Foundation Year, Bachelor)

- **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. Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the external evaluation took place online (virtual meetings)

Schedule:

10:00 – 10:10: Brief introduction of the members of the External Evaluation Committee

10:10 – 10:50: Head of the Institution and the members of the Internal Evaluation Committee

10:50 – 11:50: Programme's Coordinator (programme's standards, admission criteria for prospective students, the learning outcomes and ECTS, the content and the persons involved in the program's design and development)

11:50 - 12:00: Coffee Break

12:00 – 13:00: Meeting with members of the teaching staff on each course for all the years of study (faculty qualifications, duties in the institution and teaching obligations in other programmes, content of each course and its implementation, learning outcomes, the content and the assessment of each course and their compliance with the level of the programme according to the EQF, assessment criteria, samples of final exams or other teaching material and resources).

13:00 – 14:00: Lunch Break

14:00 – 14:30: Meeting with students only or/and their representatives.

14:30 – 14:45: Meeting with members of the administrative staff.

14:45 – 15:30: Final meeting with Program Coordinator and staff (overall issues related to the (virtual) visit, exit discussion).

15:30 – 16:00: The EEC was offered the opportunity to observe a live streaming of courses and was presented with recorded lectures to allow the EEC to get a flavour of class interaction and teaching methodology.

Introductory remarks:

The EEC made it clear from the start of the visit that the purpose was not only confirmation of compliance with the required standards, but also to help the institution to further improve the program (content and delivery). The discussions that took place were hence in line with a “peer review”, i.e. very open, future-focused and in a broader context than just the standards.

The context the EEC deemed relevant for this evaluation, was characterized by the (general) challenges of higher education. Some trends and evolutions in the world of HE have been accelerated by the pandemic (e.g. online delivery, hybrid learning, ...) and issues regarding globalisation and internationalisation, knowledge transfer and knowledge creation, impact of education and research, employability, ... were equally discussed to better frame the importance of the standards and of continuous improvement.

The EEC found clear evidence of standard compliance, but more importantly, the EEC was impressed by the dynamic, young and highly motivated and qualified faculty and the close relationships (personal touch and individual attention) between staff/faculty and students. This is, of course, due to the small number of students in the program, but it is also well “embedded” in the institution’s approach to HE, thereby establishing a competitive advantage and distinctive mission and vision.

The EEC commends the institution and the programme for having a direct impact on the local/regional economy of Pafos and the support the CDA College offers to business development

by providing well-trained students in high demand on the “market”. The College has close connections to the business world and actively and effectively helps students to find jobs (direct career services) and support its students throughout the whole learning experience.

Points of discussion and areas for further improvement concerned:

1. Growth strategy of the College in terms of number of students (per programme) and number of programmes to be offered in Pafos;
2. Programme structure with regard to the balance between compulsory courses and electives/options/specialisation fields;
3. The role of active research activities and experiential (practical) learning in the context of “blended” learning pedagogies;
4. Internationalisation (internationalisation-at-home) of staff and students and the faculty recruitment (PhD level);
5. The development of a clear strategy for the (young) programme’s future (including recruitment, (applied) research (Aristotelis Center) and programme portfolio strategies).

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Philip Vergauwen, Chair	Dean Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management	Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium
Pedro de Faria	Chair, Department Innovation Management and Strategy, Faculty of Economics and Business	University of Groningen, The Netherlands
Grigoris Satrakis	Student	MBA, University of Cyprus
Excused: Maik Hammerschmidt	Chair, Department Marketing and Innovation Management, Faculty of Business and Economics	Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

- 1.1 Policy for quality assurance
- 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
- 1.3 Public information
- 1.4 Information management

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

The EEC finds the program in compliance with the standards regarding policy for quality assurance of the programme of study. The program has a formal status and is publicly available. The institution has well working, collegial (participative) processes and structures and clear regulations to ensure academic integrity and quality assurance. The institution is well connected to the business world and actively includes internal and external stakeholders into the quality assurance processes.

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

The EEC finds that the programme of study is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes, designed by involving students, stakeholders, external expertise. The program reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base) and is designed to enable smooth student progression based on contemporary evaluation and assessment methods (i.e. exam and assignments correspond to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS and to the expected student workload. The institution offers well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate. The program is further subject to a formal, well-established institutional approval process resulting in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The EEC finds clear evidence of regular monitoring in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date and of periodical reviews (addressing the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student

expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme). These program assessments and reviews actively involve students and other stakeholders.

1.3 Public information

Standards

Regarding the programme of study, the EEC finds clear documentation/evidence of clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about selection criteria, intended learning outcomes, qualification awarded, teaching, learning and assessment procedures, pass rates, learning opportunities available to the students and graduate employment information.

1.4 Information management

Standards

The EEC was able to discuss issues related to the effective management of the programme (including performance indicators, profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, students' satisfaction with their programmes, learning resources and student support available and career paths of graduates).

The EEC finds that the program is only partial compliant to this standard, as the formal documentation offered to the EEC did not include all the above data explicitly. The EEC, therefore, encourages the institution to show and include documented measurements in any further self-evaluation report.

During the visit, the EEC found ample proof that students and staff are actively involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities. Here too, the self-evaluation report should have provided more such information up-front.

Findings

The EEC finds strong evidence of compliance with respect to international standards concerning study programme and study programme's design and development.

The EEC encourages CDA College to further develop and strengthen the BA programme by rebalancing compulsory courses and optional/elective courses (including – compulsory or not – language courses and experiential learning activities such as applied research projects, internships, group project work, etc ... allowing to strengthen knowledge with practical relevance and impact and to assess "soft" competences and skills highly appreciated by the world of business).

Strengths

The College's vision and mission to focus on "small scale" learning and to invest in close relationships with the students it admits is best-practice. The highly motivated, dynamic and well-



qualified team of teachers is highly engaged in programme design and innovation and students play an active participative role in the whole process.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC (see discussion and conclusions) suggests the School to grow the number of students (up to a maximum capacity allowing for small scale education) and develop the programme in terms of options and specialisations aligned with the strategies with respect to programme portfolio management.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
1.1 Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant
1.3 Public information	Compliant
1.4 Information management	Partially compliant

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

Sub-areas

- 2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
- 2.2 Practical training**
- 2.3 Student assessment**

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology

Standards

The EEC finds that the program operates compliant process of teaching and learning (supporting students' individual and social development). The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes, while students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.

The program is commended for the implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and – even personal - support from the teacher. Teaching methods, tools and

material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.

The program is a best-practice example of the learner-teacher relationship as the implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths. All appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.

2.2 Practical training

Standards

The EEC commends the program for its practical and theoretical interconnection. The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

The EEC finds ample evidence of consistent assessment, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures, i.e. assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner and the criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance and allow students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.

The program is commended for its “closeness” to the individual students: small cohorts clearly benefit from personal/individual continuous feedback and advice on the learning process. Assessments and evaluations clearly meet quality standards and can even be considered best-practice at the School (i.e. **the School goes well beyond compliance** with normal rules and regulations for fair examination, appeals, competence and skills assessment and special needs or mitigating circumstances.)

Findings

The EEC confirms compliance with the standards concerning student – centred learning, teaching and assessment. The small scale education strategy and the mission and vision of the College to bring higher education to the local/regional market where it is well connected with the business community is commended.

Strengths

The College's mission and vision is a clear basis for the College's unique distinctiveness and its competitive advantage. The “closeness” to the (local/regional) market needs (tourism, agriculture, education, health services) allows for impact and innovation through active (applied) research driven education.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC recommends the School to:

1. Be aware of the potential disadvantages of small-scale education (synergy, economies of scale, proximity versus objectivity, ...);
2. Improve its information management: a more formal, documented
3. And communicated mission and vision, together with performance indicators relating to e.g. student progression would strengthen compliance to internationally accepted standards and practices;
4. Put more weight to the final project and group work when assessing learning outcomes (including competences and skills) and improve documentation of achieved learning outcomes in this sense.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant</i>	<i>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology		Compliant
2.2 Practical training		Compliant
2.3 Student assessment		Compliant

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

- 3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**
- 3.2 Teaching staff number and status**
- 3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

The EEC finds that the institute adequately ensures the competence of their teaching staff: fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff lead to qualified faculty/teaching staff achieving the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and ensuring quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.

The program is commended for its highly dynamic, young, motivated and team-spirited teaching staff actively engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development. Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their

teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility. Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged and conditions of employment recognising the importance of teaching are followed. The school is very active in the Erasmus+ programs for students and staff and visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

The EEC finds that the number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study, given the programme's young age and limited number of students (8-10, with an optimal capacity set at 20 students per cohort). The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study and visiting staff numbers do not exceed the number of the permanent staff.

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

The EEC finds ample evidence of teaching staff collaborating in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad). Scholarly activity (including research focused on application and impact) to strengthen the education is encouraged. The institutes research strategy does not focus on highest-quality (theoretical and purely academic) research in top-journals. This is not only understandable for a BA level program, but is even **commended by the EEC as the research, focusing on theory application and understanding/analysing management in practice, is actively used in a participative way inviting students to carry out their own research-driven projects “on the field”**. Students thus are not only research informed, but also research active (publications are within the discipline, studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses and teaching loads allow appropriate research activity).

Findings

The EEC confirms compliance to the relevant standards and commends the College for its focus on attracting and developing adequate and qualified teaching staff.

Strengths

The EEC commends the College for its highly motivated, young and dynamic team of qualified, professional support staff and teaching faculty. Teaching faculty is strongly engaged and nourishes close connections with the students allowing for a distinctive “personal touch” and stimulating personal development and support.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC encourages the College to further increase the % of (international) PhD holding teaching staff.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant</i>
	<i>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
3.2 Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3 Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

- 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria**
- 4.2 Student progression**
- 4.3 Student recognition**
- 4.4 Student certification**

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

The EEC finds ample evidence of pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission, access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.

The EEC wishes to explicitly commend the institution for its vision and mission with respect to bringing higher education close to where students live and work. In doing so, the school's mission to **stimulate and develop the local/regional economies** through higher education "on the spot" and the active role it sees for itself as "**social elevator**" (including financial assistance and scholarship for students with weaker financial background) is a **commendable and distinctive competitive advantage** of college.

4.2 Student progression

Standards

The EEC recommends and encourages the school to improve explicit documentation and more formal communication of pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression. Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place and teaching staff and students are knowledgeable about these issues, but more formal and explicit documentation and reporting is strongly encouraged.

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

The EEC confirms compliance with respect to pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition (fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility) and finds compliant recognition procedures in place relying on institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and on cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.

4.4 Student certification

Standards

The EEC observes compliance with respect to pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification: students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

Findings

The EEC confirms compliance to standards with respect to student admission, progression, recognition and certification. The College has all required processes and structures in place to ensure and assure achievement of learning goals and objectives from admission to graduation.

Strengths

Small scale education advantages are fully exploited by highly engaged students and teaching and support staff, motivated and stimulated by exemplary leadership.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC recommends and encourages the school to improve explicit documentation and more formal communication of pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant</i> <i>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

- 5.1 Teaching and Learning resources**
- 5.2 Physical resources**
- 5.3 Human support resources**
- 5.4 Student support**

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

The EEC finds adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme. Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.) and all resources are fit for purpose.

The EEC commends the program for its student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, supported by appropriate learning resources (beyond compliance).

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

The EEC confirms compliance as so physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme. Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.) and all resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.

The EEC commends the institution for its creativity: for example, being a small institution, the school does not provide its own sports facilities but does offer its students free membership of (private) sports accommodation through contracts with local sport service providers.

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

The EEC commends the school and the program for proficient human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme. **The EEC was impressed by the professionalism and engagement of a small but very effective, highly motivated and beyond-compliance team ensuring more than adequate fit-for-purpose resources. Students explicitly mentioned the very high quality of the services available to them (with a best-practice personal touch).**

5.4 Student support

Standards

The EEC was equally impressed with the quality of student support covering the needs of a small, diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs. Students highly appreciate these services available to them. These support services further strengthen the student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support. Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.

Findings

The EEC confirms the quality and availability of learning resources and student support "beyond" compliance (best-practice).

Strengths

The EEC was impressed by the professionalism and engagement of a small but very effective, highly motivated and beyond-compliance team ensuring more than adequate fit-for-purpose resources. Students explicitly mentioned the very high quality of the services available to them (with a best-practice personal touch).

The EEC was equally impressed with the quality of student support covering the needs of a small, diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Beyond compliance.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant/</i>
	<i>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
5.1 Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2 Physical resources	Compliant
5.3 Human support resources	Compliant
5.4 Student support	Compliant

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Sub-areas

- 6.1 Selection criteria and requirements
- 6.2 Proposal and dissertation
- 6.3 Supervision and committees

- 6.1 Selection criteria and requirements: not applicable
- 6.2 Proposal and dissertation: not applicable
- 6.3 Supervision and committees: not applicable

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
6.1 Selection criteria and requirements	Not applicable
6.2 Proposal and dissertation	Not applicable
6.3 Supervision and committees	Not applicable

D. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC found clear evidence of standard compliance, but more importantly, the EEC was impressed by the dynamic, young and highly motivated and qualified faculty and the close relationships (personal touch and individual attention) between staff/faculty and students. This is, of course, due to the small number of students in the program, but it is also well “embedded” in the institution’s approach to HE, thereby establishing a competitive advantage and distinctive mission and vision.

The EEC commends the institution and the programme for having a direct impact on the local/regional economy of Pafos and the support the CDA College offers to business development by providing well-trained students in high demand on the “market”. The College has close connections to the business world and actively and effectively helps students to find jobs (direct career services) and support its students throughout the whole learning experience.

The institution has a clear mission and vision, and is encouraged to more explicitly formulate and communicate this mission and vision as the source of its competitive advantage and unique positioning. Key to the mission and vision are “proximity” and “local/regional impact on the economy” through higher education satisfying international standards.

Further improvement discussions and identified areas for further development concern:

1. Growth strategy of the College in terms of number of students (per programme) and number of programmes to be offered in Pafos

The EEC experts encourage the institution and programme management to grow the number of students without letting go of “small group education”. The BA programme is, as a general business administration bachelor programme, well suited to incorporate more specialized/optional/elective courses complementing a strong set of compulsory courses and allowing a focus on e.g. leadership and entrepreneurship. The EEC suggest the School to carefully consider the option of creating “options and specializations” within the (existing) BA programme, before starting new programmes that might cannibalize, weaken synergies and lead to a less efficient portfolio.

2. Programme structure with regard to the balance between compulsory courses and electives/options/specialisation fields;

The 210 ECTS of compulsory courses can be relatively reduced without loss of content to allow for more optional/elective courses (including language courses important for the tourism industry, leadership and entrepreneurship) and/or specialization fields, certainly when

student numbers increase over the years to come. Next to the possible reduction of the number of compulsory courses, the School might consider pedagogical strategies to further strengthen the balance between theory and practice within these courses (focused applications). Another reason to revise the compulsory courses, is that the EEC encourages the School to increase the weight given to the final (compulsory) project and to engage all teaching staff in this project. The final project, moreover, would allow for additional competence and skills based assurance of learning (on both individual and group level).

3. The role of active research activities and experiential (practical) learning in the context of “blended” learning pedagogies;

The EEC encourages the School to maintain an appropriate teaching versus research workload. Active (applied) research is what drives innovative education with impact on the economy and the business world and highly motivates students and qualified teaching staff. Research time and opportunities are equally important for the (international PhD) recruitment strategies of the institution. The creation of the Aristotelis research center formalizes this commitment to (applied) research.

4. Internationalisation (internationalisation-at-home) of staff and students and faculty/teaching staff recruitment (PhD level);

The EEC encourages the institute to further increase the % of teaching staff holding (international) PhD degrees. This is necessary for the further development of applied research and for educational innovation, but it is also key to the School's ambition to attract international, diverse and qualified faculty (teaching staff).

5. The development of a clear strategy for the (young) programme's future (including recruitment, (applied) research and programme portfolio strategies)

The EEC strongly encourages the CDA to formally formulate, communicate and execute a clear (growth) strategy for the young BA programme in line with its mission and vision and leveraging the College's competitive advantage supported by that distinctive mission and vision. The strategy should clarify and give direction to the programme portfolio development, the pedagogical innovations (content and delivery mode) and to the development of high quality (applied) research with impact.

Finally, to conclude, the EEC is confident that the CDA College has the vision and the resources, financially and human, to execute a sustainable growth strategy for its programme in compliance with HE standards.



E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Prof.dr. Philip Vergauwen	
Prof.dr. Pedro de Faria	
Mr. Grigoris Satrakis	

Date: April 13, 2021