Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 04 February 2025

External Evaluation Report

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

- **Higher Education Institution: KES College**

- **Town: Nicosia**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School/Faculty

- **Department/ Sector:** Department/Sector

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

  In Greek:

  Κηποτεχνία και Σχεδιασμός Κήπου (3 Ακαδημαϊκά Έτη, 180 ECTS, Ανώτερο Δίπλωμα)

  In English:

  Gardening and Landscaping (3 Academic Years, 180 ECTS, Higher Diploma)

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

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

- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations
In English: Concentrations

-

A. Introduction
This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

I.   The external evaluation procedure

The members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) were contacted by the Cyprus agency of quality assurance and accreditation in higher education well in advance of the planned visit to Cyprus. The EEC received in advance the application for evaluation and accreditation of the vocational programme on Gardening and Landscape Design (3 years) of KES College. This application includes information on the following:

- The content of the programme (purpose and objectives, intended learning outcomes,
- The structure of the curriculum
- The list of courses including a detailed course description and the teaching staff for each course
- Student admission requirements, student assessment policies, student obligations, tuition fees
- Policy for recruitment and promotion of teaching staff
- A list of the teaching personnel and their curriculum vitae
- Internal quality assurance regulations and organization, quality standards and indicators
- A list of research activities and publications, also highlighted as relevant to specific courses
- Feasibility study on the need to offer this programme with respect to the labour market and employability of graduates in Gardening and Landscape Design and Management, including a SWOT analysis of the programme
- The international dimension of the programme
- Administrative structure and services to students and staff
- College infrastructure (owned and outsourced)

The committee was accompanied by an officer of the Agency and visited KES College on Monday February 3, 2025 from 09:00 to 17:30. The meeting with College management representatives, staff and students, took place at the College. The schedule was organized by the Agency and the College. Moreover, the committee visited the infrastructure of the College and was provided with further information on request.

II.   The Internal Evaluation procedure

The committee received the detailed internal evaluation procedure of KES College as provided in the presentation of the College by the Education and Curriculum Design and Development Officer, which was studied along with all other information provided.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Dimitrios Georgakopoulos	Professor	Agricultural University of Athens, Greece
Antonio Ferrante	Professor	Sant'Anna School of Advanced Study of Pisa, Italy
Panayiotis Nektarios	Professor	Hellenic Mediterranean University, Greece
Demetra Koutsila	Student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*

- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
     (a) *sub-areas*
     (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
     (c) *some questions that EEC may find useful.*

- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*

- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*

- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*

- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

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

eqar//// enqa.

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

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
    - *is a part of the strategic management of the program.*
    - *focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study program.*
    - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
    - *supports the organization of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
    - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
    - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
    - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
    - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*
        - *is developed with input from industry leaders and other stakeholders (i.e. industry leaders, professional bodies/associations, social partners, NGO's, governmental agencies) to align with professional standards.*
        - *integrates employer surveys to adapt to evolving workplace demands.*
        - *regularly utilizes alumni feedback for long-term effectiveness assessment.*
        - *is published and implemented by all stakeholders.*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
    - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*

- o *Aligns course learning outcomes with student assessments using rubrics to ensure objectives are met.*
- o *Connects each course's aims and objectives with the programme's overall aims and objectives through mapping, aligning with the institutional strategy.*
- o *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
- o *benefits from external expertise*
- o *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)*
- o *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
- o *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
- o *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
- o *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
- o *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*
- o *results 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*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account 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*
- o *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*
  - ▪ collaborates with industry experts for curriculum development.
  - ▪ conducts joint reviews with external academic specialists to maintain academic rigor.
  - ▪ performs periodic assessments with external stakeholders to ensure continuous alignment with market needs.
  - ▪ establishes collaboration with international educational institutions or/& other relevant international bodies for a global perspective.
  - ▪ conducts regular feedback sessions with local community leaders for societal relevance.

1.3 Public information

Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to-date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - o *selection criteria*
  - o *intended learning outcomes*

- *qualification awarded*
- *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
- *pass rates*
- *learning opportunities available to the students*
- *graduate employment information*

In addition, the program has established mechanisms of transparency & communication to ensure that
- Professional bodies validate program descriptions and outcomes.
- Community leaders actively participate in ensuring that the program's public information is relevant and resonates with the local and societal context.
- External auditors review public information for accuracy & consistency vis-à-vis the actual implementation of the program.
- Industry-specific & societal information is regularly updated with expert inputs.
- Alumni testimonials are included for a realistic portrayal of program outcomes.

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed using specific indicators and data i.e:*
  - *key 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*
  - *career paths of graduates*
  - *industry trend analysis.*
  - *feedback mechanisms from external partners/stakeholders*
  - *data exchanges with professional networks*
  - *employer insights concerning career readiness*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*

- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*
- *How and to what extent are external stakeholders involved in the quality assurance process of the program?*
- *How is external stakeholder feedback gathered, analyzed and implemented,?*
- *In what ways do external stakeholders assist in making program information publicly available?*
- *How do external stakeholders contribute to evaluating graduate success in the labor market and obtaining feedback on employment outcomes?*

Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

1.1 **Policy for quality assurance**

KES College has implemented an internal quality assurance system taking into account the European Standards and Guidelines. The system involves the Programme Coordinator, the teaching staff, the Director General of the College, the Academic Committee of the College, and, finally, the Board of Directors. In this system, the programme of study is supported by a feasibility study by the Programme Coordinator, evaluated and approved by the Academic Committee of the College. This study is included in the application for evaluation and accreditation of the Gardening and Landscaping Programme. The study takes into account the current environmental, social, and economic aspects of the field, and demonstrates the need for professionals who can advise, design and implement gardening and landscaping projects, especially with respect to climate change and environmental concerns to be met.

The procedure on the internal quality assurance policy of KES College was presented to the EEC by the Education and Curriculum Design and Development Officer. The EEC examined it with respect to the standards to be met, and has the following remarks:

The structure for quality assurance monitoring is well described throughout all levels, from the teaching staff and students all the way to the Academic Committee of the College. The College reports continuous quality monitoring of the programme with respect to expected learning outcomes of students. The main role of the internal quality assurance (IQA) committee is the creation of a quality culture, by informing the College community, primarily the members of the teaching staff, about the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Education (ESG 2015). Representatives of the teaching staff, students and administrative staff, are members of the IQA committee with priority given to persons who have appropriate qualifications and experience in the operation of academic institutions.

The IQA committee oversees a teaching staff evaluation system with respect to performance in teaching, professional interactions beyond the classroom, involvement within the college community, overall behaviour and participation in research activities. The College reports that the above are monitored by several specific indicators (not supplied to the   EEC).

Furthermore, the IQA committee (through the Education Officer) oversees a continuous professional development process of teaching staff. The Education Officer actively participates in the teaching staff selection process by assessing candidates' teaching abilities; prepares newly appointed teaching staff, during the onboarding process, to assume their teaching responsibilities in ways that promote the College's standards in learning and teaching; provides training is to all the members of the teaching staff, and serves as a vehicle for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on matters relevant to the learning and teaching

process; attends lectures during which the Education Officer observes the teaching delivery and provides the necessary support and feedback to the teaching staff. Overall, the Education Officer is part of the Teaching Staff Evaluation System, providing her input on teaching performance.

The IQA committee distributes questionnaires to students for each course after the midterm and before the final exams of the semester. Students are not obliged to fill in and deliver these questionnaires, which are anonymous. The Education Officer and the Programme Coordinator informed the EEC that the students seem uninterested and are hard to convince to fill in the questionnaires. A small percentage returned the questionnaires during the spring semester of 2024 (2 out of 8). When they do, they sometimes tick boxes without careful consideration of the question at hand. Therefore, the EEC considers the contribution of students to the IQA procedure as weak. However, the Programme Coordinator and teaching staff reported frequent person-to-person contacts with students, which in part assists the IQA committee.

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

The study programme "Gardening and Landscaping" has the objective to train students to acquire skills and knowledge related to Gardening and Landscape Design to become professionals in this sector. The market of labour with skilled personnel in Gardening and Landscape Design in Cyprus has been increasing. The programme in Gardening and Landscape Design is a unique course in Cyprus. Therefore, graduates may have high employability. The overall programme is well designed with 6 semesters and 40 courses. The objectives are in line with the institutional strategy and have very good, expected learning outcomes.

The KES College has specific procedures in the development of the programmes of study. In particular, the procedure has three important steps: design and development, review of the process, verification and validation processes. These strategies are also applied to content of individual courses. The design and development of the study programme takes into account the mission, objectives, policy of KES College, resources required for delivering the programme at the defined quality level and reach the objectives of the individual courses.

Each course is well connected to the overall objectives of the "Gardening and Landscaping" programme of study, including theoretical and practical knowledge. The syllabus provided for each course demonstrates that each individual course is structured and aligned with the institutional KES College strategy, using different learning tools from slow to fast learning resources.

The study programme has been designed and devoted to the analysis of external environment considering the National and International Trends. Gardening and landscape have been reported to be an emerging sector in Cyprus and in the Global market. These estimations justify the request for knowledge acquirement and highly specialized professionals. The courses reported in the semesters demonstrate a smooth student progression from basic to applied science, with the acquisition of knowledge from basic to practical. The EEC

received comments that the complexity and difficulty of the study programme has decreased over the last 5 years, perhaps as a result of students' high school background and learning ability.

Analyzing the exams and assignments' content there is a coherent correspondence between the level of the programme and the number of ECTS in each course, from basic to practical projects.

The study programme is subject to approval from internal committee and Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CY.Q.A.A.). The qualifications are carried out at national and international levels, in particular to the European Higher Education Area.

The KES College provided some incentives to the teaching staff to undertake research activities correlated to their study programme. New teaching tools and methods are constantly adopted. At the end of each academic year satisfaction questionnaires are filed by students and by the teaching staff. Annually this information is analyzed by the IQA committee that includes students. The study programme includes collaborations with industries and students can spend four weeks in industry for practical education. The course is regularly evaluated by external academic specialists in order to maintain academic rigor. This evaluation comes on a five-year basis.

1.3 Public information

The Gardening and Landscaping programme is clearly presented in its specific space in the KES College website (https://www.kescollege.ac.cy/en/courses/gardening-and-landscaping/). All information for the prospect and current student is included and presented in an organized and comprehensive manner: the description of the programme, including job opportunities for graduates; learning outcomes clearly state the goal of the programme, to create skilled professionals combining a good scientific background and practical, technical skills; the study programme structure (list of courses per semester with ECTS); a brief description for each course; and the academic staff with their qualifications. The website offers detailed and thorough information on the College mission (educate students to become professionals in specific, well-defined job markets) study programmes, degrees offered for each programme, infrastructure, admission policy for students, minimum educational requirements (completed secondary education), minimum level of knowledge of English, selection criteria, intended learning outcomes, tuition fees and possibilities for financial support, student obligations, evaluation, student life (accommodation, cost of living, etc.), the academic staff, job opportunities for academic and administrative positions, connections with professional bodies and the society, connection with alumni and an array of online platforms for educational and administrative needs. Moreover, the website informs prospective students from outside Cyprus or the European Union about the administrative requirements to enter Cyprus and study at the programme: visa requirements, work and residence permits, information on accommodation, cost of living and life in Cyprus and Nicosia.

1.4 Information management

The number of students attending the Gardening and Landscaping programme of KES College is small. There are currently (February 2025) 5 students enrolled in all 3 years of the programme (3 male, 2 female). Although the number is small, the student body is gender-balanced. This has been the case also over the last 5 years of the programme: small number of students and gender-balanced.

Students progress throughout the semester by passing all exams in the three examination periods: at the end of each semester and in September. They also have the right to be examined in the next semester at a course where they initially failed. Therefore they have three examination periods available in a year. The failure rate in course examinations is generally 25-30% (information provided by the Programme Coordinator). At the end of the year, all students have advanced to the next semester. Drop-out rates have been small and related to financial difficulties of students meeting the tuition fee payments.

Student questionnaires give little insight into their views and satisfaction of the programme. The small number of students enrolled and the very small number of questionnaires delivered (2 in the spring semester of 2024) do not offer a solid basis for accurate expression of their views and satisfaction. The EEC reports that, during the in-person meeting with the students on 3/2/25, the consensus from them is that they are satisfied with the programme and their teachers, with few exceptions.

The College offers good learning resources to the students, both physical and electronic (to be evaluated in section 5 of this report). The College is in close cooperation with two stakeholders (the Lambrou and Solomou nurseries) as well as with the Christos Stelios Ioannou Foundation, and students conduct the laboratory topics of courses in their premises. Moreover, the College arranged for students to participate in real landscaping projects in various towns in Cyprus. The close cooperation of the College with stakeholders partly shapes the content of courses (laboratory topics), according to stakeholders' activities. It is important to mention that one stakeholder has a close relationship with the College and the programme, as one employee of this stakeholder is also an instructor in the programme.

The content of the study programme follows a logical sequence of courses: the first semester contains foundation courses that are necessary for the background of students (Technical high school graduates with limited exposure to basic sciences), followed by specialized courses. The learning outcomes and programme objectives comply with Level 5 of the EQF and Level 5C of the CYQF. The programme is offered only in Greek, therefore it is not possible for non-Greek speaking students to enroll.

The EEC reports that the employability of graduates of the programme is 100% (data given by the Programme Coordinator). It is therefore evident that the study programme meets the developments in the gardening and landscaping market of Cyprus.

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

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

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

eqar//// enqa.

The College implements a well-organized Internal Quality Assurance procedure. Information from the teaching staff and stakeholders is continuously collected and they are taken into account for teaching staff improvement and opportunities for collaboration with the private gardening sector in Cyprus.

The course in Gardening and Landscaping is unique in Cyprus and can be a source of skilled professionals in the field of gardening design, construction, and development. There is an increase in professionals who have expertise in gardening and green area management. All graduates found employment on the basis of interviews with the administration staff. Stakeholder participation in the programme is good.

The KES College has international collaboration for students' exchange. The active agreement is with CREA – Viticulture and Oenology.

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

The Internal Quality Assurance procedure suffers from poor student participation. Questionnaires are not turned-in by most students and, when they are, they seem prepared without much attention to questions and answers. The College is encouraged to seek more active participation of students in the IQA procedure through questionnaires, potentially through incentives. For example, the EEC suggests that the students complete the questionnaire during a time period specially allocated to this (the last 10 minutes of a lecture) and, if all of them submit the questionnaire, a small bonus to their final grade will be awarded to everyone.

The list of academic staff on the website of the study programme needs to be updated with all instructors of the programme.

The course interacts with stakeholders in event organization; there are no periodic meetings. It is suggested that meetings be scheduled at least once a year. Stakeholders that interact with the course also teach in it or other classes in KES College. The EEC recommends increasing the number of stakeholders, preferably including stakeholders without direct teaching interactions with the Gardening and Landscaping Programme.

The course has international collaborations, and the number of Erasmus agreements should be enhanced to offer students exchange with international institutions.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
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	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 process of teaching and learning supports 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.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and 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.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*
- *Detailed schedules in course materials are included, explicitly stating the expected hours for lectures, self-study, and group projects, ensuring transparency in time allocation.*
- *A system is integrated where each learning activity is assigned a weight proportional to its importance and time requirement, aiding in balanced curriculum design.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organization and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

- *The expected hours for different components of practical training, such as lab work, fieldwork, and internships are clearly documented in the training manuals*
- *A weighting system is applied to various practical training elements, reflecting their significance in the overall learning outcomes and student workload.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*
  - *The time allocation for each assessment task isexplicitly stated in course outlines, ensuring students are aware of the expected workload.*
  - *A balanced assessment weighting strategy is implemented, considering the complexity and learning objectives of each task, to ensure fair evaluation of student performance.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*

- *How is practical training organized (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

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

The teaching methodologies are well described in the course and the direct student involvement is evident. This will contribute to the active learning and well-balanced relationship between students and professors. Each course reports a section with the description of students' involvement such as working groups or laboratory exercises. Each course reports a section with the description of students' involvement such as working groups or laboratory exercises. Practical experience also involves visits to farms.

The methods of assessment are correctly reported in the syllabi of courses. The success of the exam lays on the participation, practical experience (Lab or company), intermediate written evaluation, final written test. All students pass the exams in the year. The percentage of failure is about 25-30% as declared by the course coordinator and administrative board.

Practical experience is schedule at first and second year, four weeks for each stage. This activity has been performed in two companies that are also stakeholders, which collaborate with KES Collage.

The curriculum design is balanced having introductory courses during the first study year and focusing on Gardening and Landscaping courses afterwards. Within each course, there is a detailed categorization of each learning activity, and its importance is underscored through the proportions of the grading system. In addition, the whole course has assigned ECTS units that have been allocated based on the time and effort demands to successfully fulfil it.

Faculty are encouraged to use a variety of teaching methods and assessment techniques to achieve the principles of active student engagement and effective teaching, in alignment with the learning outcomes of the programme of study. More specifically, since students participating in the programme have various backgrounds, faculty makes efforts to support those students that seem to have a lower educational level compared to the remaining ones. Efforts are focused on explaining further the subjects of the course whenever needed to the whole class. In this way, students are encouraged to individual development though collaborative work of the class. In relation to social development, students are encouraged to interact with the market as well as provide volunteered work, thus enhancing their social development thought practical application of their knowledge

The College has established teaching and learning resources in an effort to create an attractive curriculum by utilizing all available learning resources and modes of delivery such as textbooks (both hard copies and electronic form), computer labs, multimedia, lectures, speeches, seminars, educational visits, digital learning resources, podcasts, web platforms such as YouTube, hands-on experience, familiarization with active landscape and gardening projects.

The process of teaching is escalating starting from introductory courses which is appropriate considering the diverse experiences and backgrounds of the students that provide the resources for acquiring advanced knowledge, skills, and competencies that the students will encounter in subsequent courses. Therefore, the teaching process and learning are considered flexible. However, the curriculum is based on obligatory courses and has limited number of elective courses. In that sense, the curriculum is not considered as flexible, even though it is understandable due to the very small number of students.

Most of the courses demand a continuous interaction between faculty and students, thus promoting the active role of the students to the learning process. The small number of students participating in the programme, facilitates such interaction in the theoretical part of the courses. In the laboratory session of the courses, the active role of students is encouraged further, since learning is based on experiential procedures in conjunction with hands-on experience. The official memorandum of understanding with companies (Solomou Garden Center, GreenTech) and foundations (Christos Steliou Ioannou Foundation) and the materialization of volunteered projects with societal impact further enhance students' active role to the learning process.

It is positive that students perform visits supervised by the faculty to market enterprises, participation in on-going landscape projects and the materialization of volunteered project provide excellent opportunities for providing the sense of autonomy to the students.

Teaching methods are variable and adjusted to the nature of each course. In the theoretical part of the course teaching methods are utilizing modern methods and tools such as projected presentations, use of online systems if needed, computers equipped with necessary software and peripherals of adequate size, quality and speed, access to books and e-books as well to broad scientific databases such as HEALINK.

In contrast, the laboratory part of the courses teaching methods, infrastructure and equipment are considered inadequate. The lack of an open space near the College infrastructure for executing experiential laboratory sessions combined with the absence of modern gardening equipment is a disadvantage to the whole programme which is obviously oriented towards the practical application of agricultural and gardening knowledge in the field. Students are acquainted with only the basic (non-motorized) equipment and receive no practical experience of several gardening equipment. As an example, students do not get hands-on experience in tractors, rototillers, chainsaws, telescopic chainsaws, blowers, trimmers, walk-behind and riding rotary and reel mowers, triplex mowers, hedge trimmers, hand and tractor boom sprayers and many other gardening and landscaping equipment. In addition, there is limited hands-on experience on using scientific equipment in the field such as soil compaction penetrometer, soil moisture determination using TDR or other technologies, portable pH, EC meters etc. In addition, students are unaware of the necessary preparations and maintenance required for each of the above gardening and landscaping equipment.

It is expected that through the MoU with the Institution Christos Steliou Ioannou Foundation, apart from the disposition of the outdoor spaces, it will provide the acquisition of all necessary gardening and landscaping equipment, and faculty will be able to support with safety the education and hands-on experience of the students.

Collaboration and mutual respect between students and staff were found to be at a high level. Students and faculty collaborate to understand learning problems and propose joint solutions. Students were found to be respectful towards the faculty as well as graceful since faculty apart from teaching also provides the necessary networking between students and the market for potential job opportunities. Similarly, the faculty was found to be respectful and thoughtful towards the students. This mutual respect is built on daily interaction between faculty and students, and it is quantified with the use of an online questionnaires at the end of each academic semester. The questionnaire is open from mid-term until the exam period at the end of the semester providing adequate time for students to fill and submit the questionnaire and provide feedback on issues related to their student life at the College and their learning experience in the programs.

The College has not established a specific procedure for dealing with students' complaints since the number of students is not large. Up to date, complaints are dealt with the course instructors, and at a higher level with the coordinator. Further complaints are expressed through the on-line questionnaire provided at the end of each semester. However, the College must establish a complete student complaint procedure, which must be included on all relevant brochures and websites giving extra consideration on anonymity. The procedure should also be hierarchically stepwise, initiating from the instructor for academic issues. For complaints of other nature, the College might consider establishing a procedure of "Student Advocate" having a high degree of confidentiality.

The College and the specific programme provide complete and adequate description per course stating the lecture hours, self-study and group projects. However, a significant drawback is the integration of the laboratory session with the theory of each course. At the curriculum provided, information refers to the whole course (theory and laboratory) without providing a distinct aim and goals for the laboratory sessions. This is considered as a significant disadvantage since the 3-year programme is mainly oriented towards practical and experiential knowledge acquisition and thus the laboratory owes to be defined as a distinct and autonomous module within each course. In that sense, laboratories must have their own schedule, aims and goals, teaching methods, type of examinations, and of course grading. It is highly suggested that the grade of a course should be determined as the average between the theory and the laboratory grades. Further, it was realized that laboratories do not have a specific time allocation and depend on weekly arrangement between faculty and students. Laboratories usually take place on weekends, which should be checked for allowance by the Cyprian legislation. However, students did not seem to object to having Laboratories during the weekend since most of them have a daily job apart from their studies at the College. In any case, the weekly schedule must be established with rigid time allocation for each Laboratory session at the initiation of each semester.

Finally, laboratories are mainly executed in premises away from the College infrastructure and traveling and safety concerns should be addressed.

2.2 Practical training

Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected since the programme is based on experiential learning. However, even though this is a gardening and landscape programme oriented towards acquiring practical and professional experience, laboratories are embedded within the course without a distinct entity. In addition, there is a great imbalance between practical and theoretical studies between different courses. Some courses are overwhelmed with practical sessions (we assume that are considered as laboratories), while others have minimal practical (laboratory) sessions. It is also unclear the separation between the laboratories and the educational visits or exhibition visits.

The programme has scheduled adequate practical training to meet the needs of the stakeholders. The practical training has two components: a) the execution of laboratory sessions and b) the two Practice (I and II) courses having 4 weeks of training each.

A) As mentioned above, the organization of the laboratories is blur, without a rigid weekly schedule, intermingling several laboratories from one or more courses and with misinterpreting with visits or exhibition activities

B) In contrast, the two Practice courses seem to be clear, and both College and Faculty are keen to interconnect the students with the local enterprises and companies. In this sense, it seems that the practical training meets the needs of the stakeholders since in several instances stakeholders have employed students that fulfilled their practices in their premises and enterprises.

There is an inadequate allocation of the expected hours between different components of practical training in the curriculum. In addition, the weekly schedule changes depending on faculty and student availability

and it is based on weekly communication between the two parties. There is no information on a weighting system between the various training elements to reflect their importance in learning outcomes and demanded workload from the students. In addition, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, there is no separated evaluation and correspondingly grade for the laboratories of each course. Thus, it is impossible to evaluate individually the learning outcomes and workload.

2.3. **Student assessment**

Student assessment procedure is clearly stated in the curriculum and based on the students' opinion, it is fairly applied equally to all students. The assessment procedure is appropriate since it combines several examination approaches such as participation in the class and laboratory, written assignments and reports, mid-term examination which is crucial for potential countermeasures and corrective actions and a final exam. However, oral examination which might be appropriate for laboratory evaluation procedures is missing from the curriculum. This type of examination might also be proven valuable in case of ailments such as dyslexia which is very common among students that prefer practical and professional degrees compared to the university ones.

Students are considering the assessment methods as objective and are satisfied. The criteria for assessment methods and grading are published in the curriculum which is published on the website of the Gardening and Lanscape/Garden design programme and College. Students believe that assessment permits them to verify their acquaintance with the subjects taught in each course. In all cases but one, students are permitted to have access to their examination papers and discuss further the correct answers and the route of reaching them through justification from the faculty member responsible for each course. Due to the minimal number of students participating to the programme and the specialization required by the faculty staff assessment from more than one examiner is not applicable. However, the instructor of a course is present during Midterm examinations while the final examination is supervised by another faculty member. In case of questions the instructor of the course is notified and provides the necessary explanations.

The College has not established a specific procedure for dealing with students' appeals since the number of students is not large. Up to date, complaints are dealt with the course instructors, and at a higher level with the Coordinator. Further complaints are expressed through the on-line questionnaire provided at the end of each semester.

Assessors are familiar with testing and examination methods based on the samples collected from various courses. For the examinations, they utilize a mix of questions with selection from multiple choices, right/wrong, mini essays, fill in the blanks etc. The examination assessment is supported by assignments and essays either autonomously or in groups depending on the course, which are assessed separately, and their grade is taken into consideration for the final grade.

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

Students during their study programme can stay four weeks in local industry such as fertilizers selling company and nursery. These experiences have an important impact on improving practical skills.

It has been reported that there is a direct involvement of students in active learning. During the interview it has been reported that students are involved in real case studies, and they have to simulate how to solve problems.

Students can be updated on the novelties that are continuously placed on the market.

The programme accepts 10 students per year, which is a limited number. The small number of students with almost the double number of instructors facilitates and reinforces the educational procedure permitting a thorough interaction between tutor and student.

The curriculum is market-oriented and enhances the interaction between the educational institution and the enterprises and the market, thus facilitating the professional course of the graduates.

The program facilitates the experiential education of the students with visits on actively materialized projects.

Evaluation and assessment of the students is meritocratic and transparent contributing to the positive and professional status of the educational programme.

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

In each course, the assessment should be better detailed with the duration and the type of questions such as open questions or multichoice questions. The evaluation of each course takes into consideration different aspects such as attendance and participation, etc. For each term of evaluation there is the weight, but it is not reported the range of scores. This information should be included.

The comparison of syllabi of the individual course shows that there are some overlaps with the study programme. Therefore, it is suggested to have a meeting with teachers and better define the programme of each course.

In the course Olericulture and introduction to hydroponics a brief introduction on vertical farming or indoor farming should be reported. Ornamental plant stability and destructive or non-destructive methods for evaluation should be included in the plant protection courses.

The autonomy of the learners seems to be different between the course theoretical part and laboratories. In the theoretical part, students seem to have reduced autonomy on specific courses while the autonomy is enhanced in courses that demand inspiration, initiatives and self-motivations such as the Garden Design courses. Even though this is understandable and expected, faculty should promote further the autonomy of the students **in the theoretical part of the courses** by assigning personal homework tasks as well as group projects to the students. The assignments should be followed by guidance, supervision, and justified suggestions and corrections towards the fulfilment of the projects.

It was noted that students participating in the programme have various backgrounds. Faculty makes efforts to support those students that seem to have a handicap compared to the remaining ones. Efforts are focused on explaining further the subjects of the course whenever needed to the whole class. In this way, students

are encouraged to individual development though collaborative work of the class. However, using this approach the remaining students might feel bored and lose their interest in the coursework. Faculty should consider another option for explaining and encouraging students who confront learning difficulties, by using extra teaching time whenever needed. In this way, students with learning difficulties will keep up with the coursework and advanced students would not lose their rhythm and interest.

In the laboratory part of the courses teaching methods, infrastructure and equipment is considered inadequate. The lack of an open space near the College campus for executing experiential laboratory sessions combined with the absence of modern gardening equipment is a disadvantage to the whole programme which is obviously oriented towards the practical application of agricultural and gardening knowledge in the field. Students are acquainted with only the basic (non-motorized) equipment and receive no practical experience of several gardening equipment. As an example, students do not get hands-on experience in tractors, rototillers, chainsaws, telescopic chainsaws, blowers, trimmers, walk-behind and riding rotary and reel mowers, triplex mowers, hedge trimmers, hand and tractor boom sprayers and many other gardening and landscaping equipment. In addition, there is limited hands-on experience on using scientific equipment in the field such as soil compaction penetrometer, soil moisture determination using TDR or other technologies, portable pH, EC meters etc. Students are unaware of the necessary preparations and maintenance required for each of the above gardening and landscaping equipment.

The integration of the laboratory session with the theory of each course is considered as a significant drawback. At the curriculum provided, information refers to the whole course (theory and laboratory) without providing a distinct aim and goals for the laboratory sessions. This is considered as a significant disadvantage since the 3-year programme is mainly oriented towards practical and experiential knowledge acquisition and thus the laboratory owes to be defined as a distinct and autonomous module within each course. In that sense, laboratories must have their own schedule, aims and goals, teaching methods, type of examinations, and of course grading. It is highly suggested that the grade of a course should be determined as the average between the theory and the laboratory grades. Further, it was realized that laboratories do not have a specific time allocation and depend on weekly arrangement between faculty and students. Laboratories usually take place on weekends, which should be checked for allowance by the Cyprian legislation. A weekly schedule must be established with rigid time allocation for each Laboratory session at the initiation of each semester.

It is expected that through the MoU with the Institution Christos Steliou Ioannou Foundation, apart from the disposition of the outdoor spaces, it will provide the acquisition of all necessary gardening and landscaping equipment, and faculty will be able to support with safety the education and hands-on experience of the students.

It was also noted that Laboratories' thematic sessions were intermingled by pooling several laboratories of each course or even between different courses within a single day. This pooling should be avoided. However, if the administration decides to permit this approach, it should be clear each time, which laboratory material is taught, how it will benefit the students, and how it will be examined. It should also be explicitly clear, the separation between laboratory execution and visiting or exhibition activities.

The College has not established a specific procedure for dealing with students' complaints since the number of students is not large. Up to date, complaints are dealt with the course instructors, and at a higher level with the coordinator. Further complaints are expressed through the on-line questionnaire provided at the end of each semester. However, the College must establish a complete student complaint procedure, which must be included on all relevant brochures and websites giving extra consideration on anonymity. The procedure should also be hierarchically stepwise, initiating from the instructor for academic issues. For complaints of other nature, the College might consider establishing a procedure of "Student Advocate" having a high degree of confidentiality.

Students strongly complained about a specific faculty member that denied access to the examination papers of the students. This denial, on behalf of the faculty member, forces students to officially complain to the coordinator of the program who managed to provide the examination papers to the students. However, such attitude should be tolerated by the administration based on student-centred educational system since the coordinator should not be able to justify and explain the correct answers to the students. The right of the students to review their examination papers with the course instructor should be added to the Departmental regulating bylaws.

The College must establish a complete student complaint procedure, which must be included on all relevant brochures and websites giving extra consideration on anonymity. The procedure should also be hierarchically stepwise, initiating from the instructor for academic issues. For complaints of other nature, the College might consider establishing a procedure of "Student Advocate" having a high degree of confidentiality.

The faculty should add examination methods including electronic tests which would save significant time to the faculty members and pop-up tests (either in paper or electronically) to evaluate the continuation and normality of studying and training between the major examinations (mid-term and final exams). Oral exams might also become extremely handy especially for the laboratory session of the courses. Time allocation for each assessment is not provided in the course outlines. In some cases, it could collectively be deducted from the declared grade percentage.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Partially 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

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly 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.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate 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 to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

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

eqar//// enqa.

- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

The College advertises open positions for instructors in their webpage (https://www.kescollege.ac.cy/en/career-opportunities/). Neither a specific scientific background, nor a number of positions is evident (4/2/25). Instead, the focus of recruitment advertisements is on the qualities of a prospect employee (energy, passion, creativity, ethos, courage, confidence, etc), which are indeed important, but also more difficult to assess. The open positions are first approved by the Director General of the College, then advertised. Candidates are evaluated by the Director of Academic Affairs, the Programme Coordinator, the Education Officer and the Human Resources Manager. Candidates go through a personal interview and a demo lesson. The EEC finds the strategy for evaluating candidate instructors as rigorous and fair. Currently, the College is not seeking any new instructors for the Gardening and Landscaping programme. The instructors in this programme have been employed in the College for several years. The EEC interviewed the teaching staff (all except one present) on 3/2/25. All teaching staff interacts with the Education Manager concerning teaching methods and outcomes. The College makes available to the teaching staff licenced software packages for teaching and class management, which facilitate their work. Teachers reported to the EEC that they regularly revise and update their course material.

3.2. Teaching staff number and status

The teaching staff of the programme consists of 9 instructors, 5 women and 4 men. The staff is gender-balanced. There are six instructors in full-time status (defined as at least 12 hours of teaching per week) and three instructors in part-time status. All instructors have Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Landscape Architecture and Gardening, or in other related disciplines. One of the instructors (and Programme Coordinator) has a Doctorate degree. All instructors had prior experience in the field of Landscape Architecture and Gardening or in related fields (Conservation, Agriculture, Forestry, Plant Protection) as educators or as private professionals. All reported that they have other professional positions and activities as well (the Programme Coordinator not included). The EEC finds that the overall scientific background of the instructors is broad and covers very well all aspects of the programme. Instructors bring to the programme the necessary scientific AND professional (applied) experience to the students of the programme.

3.3. Synergies of teaching and research

Teachers are encouraged to participate in activities beyond their classroom duties. The College has founded a Research Centre, where small-scale applied research projects are conducted. Moreover, the College periodically offers small research grants of 1000 € to interested instructors, to carry out a small-scale research project. This is not currently available to the instructors of the Gardening and Landscaping programme but will be in the future. The College also participates in several Erasmus+ mobility activities; however, most teachers of the Gardening and Landscaping programme have not taken part in these activities. Finally, the College is part of the consortia of 3 European Union projects (Horizon, Life, Interreg), in which teachers (and students) are involved.

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

The staff of the Gardening and Landscaping programme of KES College has been involved in 15 research projects and 3 of them are ongoing. It has been declared that students and teaching staff are actively involved in the projects. KES College promotes annual calls to offer financial incentives up to 1000 euro to academic staff. The research project activities allowed the involvement of KES college to 4 conference announcements, writing papers in collaboration with enterprises, academics and professional associations securing external funding from businesses and the Republic of Cyprus-EU. Research partners include MAC Cosmetics–Costas Papaellinas Ltd, POMICO Ltd, Impophar Trading Ltd, ResultMed Ltd, VENUS ROSE Cosmetics, Univ. of Cyprus-Black Gold Team, Medical Representatives Association, Organic Farmers Association, LACON Ltd, Association of Cypriot Tourism Enterprises (ΣΤΕΚ), APIVITA.

The research output of the Programme Coordinator and of some members of the teaching staff of the Gardening and Landscaping programme has been presented at scientific and professional conferences and has even been included in few scientific publications. These activities are desirable, especially when they come from a vocational education programme, and are an important aspect of technology transfer to students.

In view of the small number of students enrolled in the Gardening and Landscaping programme, the ratio of teaching staff to students is excellent and has been as such for the last 5 years. Student evaluation of the

teaching staff is taken into account by the College administration, but not so much through the analysis of questionnaires (limited use), but through personal communication, which can also be an effective channel for incorporating student views on the teaching staff.

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

The KES College can be more specific on open positions in the "career opportunities" tab of the website. Specific job descriptions could be advertised to cover specific courses or groups of related courses, along with desired skills (degrees, professional background, languages, etc). More professionals from the Gardening and Landscape market should be sought as instructors.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
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

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *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.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *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

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings
A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

4.1. Student admission, processes and criteria

The student admission to the course is open to any students with higher secondary educational school diploma. The application forms and instructions are updated every year, especially for discount opportunity for the enrolment fee. There is not a minimum threshold for the enrolment to the course. All information is available on the website and admission file document. Admissions and Student Services are available for supporting the students interested in the enrolment to the course. The staff of Admissions and Student Services provides information on admission policy, regulations, and description of the Study programme. The number of students ranges is currently low.

4.2. Student progression

The teaching and learning working loads are measured using ECTS as requested by National and European standards. The progression of studies and programme is registered in a web application called Classter and the teaching materials are available on Moodle. This application belongs to Learning Management System (LMS) and facilitates students to access to courses information and materials such as syllabus, handouts,

literature, and e-books. Moodle can allow personalised learning environments which can be used for students that require additional teaching support.

Through these applications administration office monitors and reviews the carrier of a single student, moreover, it ensures that students have at least 70% of attendance as required by national regulations.

4.3. Student recognition

The effective learning recognitions is carried out on attendance, practical laboratory, middle and final examination. Different weights have been attributed to these learning parts and total must be 100%.

KES College promotes mobility of the students through Erasmus+, and mobility of students and teaching staff has been reported to the EEC. There are also non-formal teaching events involving the local community in planting ornamental plants in urban area or garden construction. The KES College has ongoing international research projects and students are involved providing extra training, all these activities are recognised as practical laboratory.

4.4. Student certification

 The students succeed in their studies after passing all exams and practical experience. The Grade Range for each course is 0-100 and the Passing Grade is 60/100. All exams and scores are recorded and available for each student. There is not a thesis or final exam, therefore, after completing the study programme and successfully passed all exams the student gains the Higher Diploma in "Gardening and Landscaping". The College supplies each graduate with the Degree Certificate, Transcript of Academic Record, and a European Diploma Supplement as per the standard template. The score of the degree awarded is shown on the Transcript of Academic Record that accompanies the degree and the European Diploma Supplement.

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

Students can access their studying materials online and can access ebooks through the library or using the Moodle platform. More gardening and landscape professionals should be sought as instructors, to bring to students the latest novelty in the sector. Two practical external activities are planned during their curriculum. These practical experiences are important for facing the real professional world. Students have access to their studying materials anytime through the Moodle platform, and with the Classter platform the students and teachers are constantly informed on the progression of activities and learning. The students receive a Diploma Supplement in line with European Educational Standards.
The College Administration through Classter can follow the teacher and students' activities, helping in the monitoring of the course progression.
The acquired knowledge is classified based on learning outcomes and programme objectives comply with level 5 of European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and level 5c in the CYQAA classification, which c indicates a three-year course.

The learning, teaching, and student assessments are evaluated using questionnaire filled by students and teachers.

The KES College has its own Internal Quality Control (IQC) which includes teaching stuff, students, and administrative staff. The IQC has the objective to implement the standards for internal quality assurance. This strategy can help the KES College to maintain the CYQAA standards.

The involvement of students in open lab activities related to research projects ongoing such as the Life project is an important learning resource. It has been reported that in 15 projects more than 100 students and academic staff have been involved.

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

The number of students enrolled per year is low and strategies to increase them should be taken into consideration. KES College should organise at least one open-day per year and invite students from Higher secondary school to visit the collage, participate to national fairs dedicated to gardening and ornamental plants for presenting the course.

During the interview with students, it came up that a teacher does not satisfactorily explain the evaluation of final written test, even after specific request. The committee suggests **defining a specific day after the exam for a meeting between the teacher and students**, where students can observe their mistakes, and teacher can explain the correct expected answers and the reason of the final score attributed.

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

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

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

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

eqar//// enqa.

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

- *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.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *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.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

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

eqar//// enqa.

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *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.*
- *Students receive support in research-led teaching through engagement in research projects, mentorship from research-active faculty, and access to resources that enhance their research skills and critical engagement with current studies.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

The College teaching and learning resources are adequate for the study programme. Students have access to online teaching resources using the Moodle platform. This web application gives possibility to teachers to share study materials with students. Students have access to several design software such as AutoCAD, SketchUp, photoshop, Microsoft suite 365, etc., as well as all necessary online bibliography through the library subscription to bibliographic databases. The Classter platform is used for class management tasks.

5.2 Physical resources

The College has a library with books and magazines in paper and in silico. Students have physical access to library anytime of the week during the working hours and online access 24/7. The College has two computer labs for the design and landscape planning, with adequate equipment in terms of number and specifications. Replacement of older computer screens with newer ones is in progress (as of 3/2/25).

The students have access to physical laboratories such as microscopy, soil science, plant physiology, and chemistry. Microscopy lab is used for botany and microbiology exercises. Soil science lab is used for laboratory exercises on pH and soil humidity measurements. Chemistry lab is used for simple analytical chemistry exercises. Students are aware of practical training and safety instructions to be followed.

Students with low knowledge at entry teachers provide them special attention by providing additional studying materials and giving them extra time during written evaluations.

The resource and space available are satisfactory for the number of enrolled students.

Lectures are in the afternoon-evening sessions giving the opportunity of student-workers to attend the classes.

5.3 Human support resources and 5.4 Student support

The College has a Student Welfare Services office with adequately trained staff to provide student support right from their arrival at the College and during their curriculum studiorum for any problems related to learning or everyday life such as the organization of events or sport activities. The Student Support team also helps the students for information forms or applications for financial support from the government. KES college has a Counselling Services office which provides impartial and confidential advice and support to students even for personal problems that can be related to academic progress. There is also an international support team that helps foreign students with forms, visa, and other immigration documents. The coordinator is directly involved in the support of students. This is justified by the limited number of students enrolled in the course.

For the specific program of study, the students are not assigned to a personal academic advisor. The program coordinator is responsible to fill that role, guide and advice the students throughout their whole course of studies. Considering the small number of students registered at this study program, the coordinator of the program will be able to handle the students, without neglecting any of them.

The majority of the students registered at the program study are also actively working at jobs related to the field of study. The college has evening time courses in order to help students' attendance at lectures

and labs. The college is also in collaboration with companies in order to offer to the students practical training positions and permanent job opportunities.

Students of the program are also covered with security insurance in case of an accident during academic period of time and at academic ground. The college will cover the expenses for the students through the insurance policy.

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

The students have the most appropriate laboratories for practises to support the theoretical learning. All laboratories have enough and updated instruments, considering the study programme requirements. The low number of students results in a low ratio students/teacher with a benefit in terms of support and guidance for each student. There is a support office for students'opportunity including Erasmus exchange programme. There is evidence that students and staff took advantage of this opportunity. In general, the overall support teams are satisfactory and are able to address any problem that students can encounter during their study.

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

During the interview with students, it is reported that the practical experience in microscopy laboratory was limited to botany. The committee suggests using the microscopy for plant pathogen and insect identification as practical exercises. Moreover, practical gardening activities should be also planned such as the use of sprays or the application of fertilizers, etc., as previously recommended in Section 2 of this report.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
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

Standards
- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
  - *the examinations*
  - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
  - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards
- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
  - *the chapters that are contained*
  - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
  - *the minimum word limit*
  - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*

- *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - *support for writing research papers*
  - *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Are the criteria reflected in dissertation samples?*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
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

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The College complied with the 2019 external evaluation report and the suggestions of the reviewers. This external evaluation committee has found that the curriculum of the 3-year Gardening and Landscaping programme is well designed for the learning outcomes of its graduates: to be professionals in the Gardening and Landscaping market. The need for this vocational programme is justified because of the booming construction sector in Cyprus, challenges from climate change and increased temperatures, a decreasing supply and quality of irrigation water, and degrading soil quality because of the above. The gardening and landscaping professionals in Cyprus must be well trained to tackle these challenges. In this sense, the programme on Gardening and Landscaping meets the needs of the market and society. In view of these, the EEC is surprised by the low number of students attending the programme over the last 5 years and is pleased that all graduates have found employment. The EEC points out some important aspects of the curriculum that need improvement:

•   Students need to get significantly more hands-on training on a range of tools and equipment regularly used in the Gardening sector: soil tillers, chain saw, lawn mowers, tractors, sprayers for pesticides and fertilizers, etc. They will need to know how to operate these, right from their first day of employment.

•   Students need to get significantly more training in the recognition of pests and pathogens with the microscope and magnifying lenses. This will improve their ability to use the correct plant protection products, following recommendations from agronomists.

•   The EEC received comments that the complexity and difficulty of the study programme has decreased over the last 5 years, perhaps as a result of student high school background and learning ability. This is not desired. The College should maintain a good level of scientific information in terms of volume and quality that a vocational study programme should have.

The EEC has an overall positive opinion on the KES College "Gardening and Landscape" 3-year programme towards a Higher Diploma. This report pointed the strengths of the programme and recommended solutions to alleviate the weaknesses of the programme, for the benefit of its graduates.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Dimitrios Georgakopoulos	
Antonio Ferrante	
Panayiotis Nektarios	
Demetra Koutsila	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 04 February 2025