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External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Neapolis University Pafos
- **Town:** Pafos
 - **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities
 - **Department/ Sector:** Department of History, Politics and International Studies

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

In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα Νεότερης και Σύγχρονης Ιστορίας (1,5 Ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS, Εξ αποστάσεως)

In English:

MA in Modern and Contemporary History (1,5 academic year, 90 ECTS, Master E-Learning)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The visit of the EEC took place on Monday 16 October 2023 at the premises of Neapolis University of Paphos. Ahead of the onsite visit, an initial briefing session was held online (via Zoom) on 10 October between the four members of the panel and the representative of the CYQAA, during which the EEC were briefed about the programme of the visit; were given access to a wealth of digital information resources provided by the University and the Department about the programme; and discussed the allocation of areas of priority for each member based on their respective expertise and interests.

The onsite visit commenced at 10:00 with a comprehensive briefing on the University's strategic goals and milestones of the past years by Prof. Savvas Chatzichristofis, Vice Rector of Research and Innovation, Member of Internal Evaluation Committee and Head of the University's Research Department; and a presentation of the internal quality assurance mechanisms Dr. Georgia Christou, Head of the Quality Assurance Department. The visit proceeded with a series of thematic sessions with representatives of the Department and members of the NUP's Distance Learning Unit: the first on the strategic planning, activities, achievements, and challenges of the Department of History, Politics and International Studies; second, on the goals, standards, structure, and content of the programme (PhD in Modern and Contemporary History); and third, on the learning and research support (both on-campus and digital) of the programme (learning philosophy, dedicated E-learning delivery and support, learning materials/activities used in the synchronous and asynchronous learning sessions, management of the student journey and learning experience, learning support, student profiles and journeys after graduation).

The visit also included dedicated sessions with members of the programme's teaching team and with representatives of the University's student-facing administrative teams (student support, resources, facilities); and onsite tours to the facilities. During these sessions, the members of the EEC were provided with all the necessary information about the operation of the programme and the way it is supported by the University's learning and support infrastructures. A separate session with students of the programme – either currently studying or recent graduates - enabled the members of the panel to hear directly of their experiences as students of the programme and noted the very high levels of student satisfaction with the content, delivery, and administration of the distance-learning programme.

The EEC onsite visit concluded at 6.30 with a final session with Prof Pantelis Silvia's, Rector of the University and many of the University/Department representatives who had participated in earlier panels.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Piers Ludlow	Professor	London School of Economics
Iakovos Michailidis	Professor	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Aristotle Kallis	Professor	Keele University
Santi Caballé	Professor	Open University of Catalonia
Neta Christoforou	Student	University of Cyprus
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.**

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:*
 - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
 - *supports the organisation 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*

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*
 - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
 - *benefits from external expertise*
 - *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)*
 - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
 - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
 - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
 - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
 - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*

- *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*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *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*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
 - *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*
- *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?*

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.

This is a typical program of Modern and Contemporary History. In reality, it mainly focuses on Greek and Cypriot history during the 19th and 20th centuries. The program's objectives and learning outcomes are

well-defined and align with European standards for higher education. The distribution of courses between mandatory and electives is appropriate, as is the case with the final postgraduate thesis. The organization of the program enhances students' competences and skills in the areas of research, writing, and presenting their work.

The program's students primarily come from the public sector, and as a result, the program currently meets the demands of the job market, as most students need a postgraduate degree for their professional development.

The Committee believes that the program could further enhance its identity by possibly focusing more on the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and local history, or by strengthening its interdisciplinarity by offering courses from other related fields. This way, it could attract students from the international market, not just from Greece and Cyprus.

Strengths

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

Clearly defined learning outcomes and competences.

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 was somewhat concerned at the mismatch between the rather general title of the programme and the rather narrower content. This is something that the Department ought to think about seriously. One option might be to change the name, more accurately to reflect the concentration on Greek and Cypriot history. Alternatively, given that a broader programme is probably more marketable, thought might be given to extending the coverage, possibly including more on the Eastern Mediterranean and maybe also the Middle East.

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

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

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

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

Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
 - *among students*
 - *between students and teaching staff*
 - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning 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 e-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.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

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

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *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 e-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.*

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
 - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
 - *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
 - ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
 - *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
 - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
 - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
 - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
 - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?*
- How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- 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 organised (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.

The nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study.

The university's learning management system facilitates online teaching, learning and administrative tasks. This is a Moodle installation that offers essential online services. The platform provides both synchronous (via Office365/MS Teams) and asynchronous tools, ensuring students can interact with lecturers, peers, and materials. E-assessment options, including quizzes with immediate feedback, are available for gauging student understanding. Although more complex e-assessment forms exist for evaluating competencies, such as critical thinking, they were not demonstrated during the meetings. Each course offers at least 6 hours of teleconferences, ensuring sufficient live interaction between teachers and students. These

teleconferences are recorded for those students unable to attend in real-time though most students typically do.

Collaboration between teachers and students and among students takes place synchronously via group teleconferences and asynchronously through the LMS's online forums. Student collaboration is further encouraged through project-based learning activities. However, the design, procedure, and technical support for these activities were not presented.

Formative course assessment includes a midterm assignment that contributes to 20% of the final grade, providing individualized feedback during the course. The summative assessment comprises a mandatory final exam worth 60% of the grade. Course assessment also involves four peer reviews and other interactive tasks, which count for the remaining 20%. Despite a broad range of interactive activity types, such as jigsaw, wikies, presentations, serious games and simulations, etc., it was not clarified how they align with this particular programme. Optional formative self-assessment tasks with indicative answers are included weekly to help students self-evaluate their understanding and skills.

Strengths

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

The EEC considers the university's distance learning model to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time online students who have professional and family duties and need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion. The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a good student-teacher ratio (1/15) on average, and student feedback is very positive

The provision of personalised feedback in the submitted assignments and during the teleconference sessions as well as the feedback based on rubrics and peer-review assessment are considered best practices. In addition, the EEC recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities, project based, and discussions organised in online teams. Finally, the very detailed weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week, is also considered a best practice. The EEC urges the university to keep up these strong elements of their distance learning model while reinforcing them when possible.

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 believes that continually evaluating the quality assurance of distance learning by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations, such as EDEN, is a good practice. Therefore, the university is urged to keep applying for external accreditations (EFQUEL, EADTU, etc), to evaluate the quality of its distance learning model.

The EEC suggests that the university considers possible challenges if the program attracts international students from varied time zones, emphasizing the need for more asynchronous online collaborations.

Eventually, the university should ensure they have the appropriate technology to support online final exams and consider strengthening formative assessments rather than summative assessment.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	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.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *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.*
- *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:

- *Is the teaching staff qualified to teach in the e-learning programme of study?*
- *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.

The EEC members were impressed with the dedication and collaboration of the teaching staff involved in the organisation and delivery of the e-learning programme. The team charged with the delivery of the Programme come from a variety of research backgrounds (history of Cyprus, Greece, Europe; early-modern, modern, and contemporary expertise), have strong research records and portfolios of current activities, and complement each other effectively to support the Programme's necessary broad coverage of areas, periods, and topics but also ensure its educational coherence. The EEC were briefed extensively about the rigorous University-wide systems of staff recruitment to ensure that the students participating in the programme are taught by experts who are also particularly adept at delivering a successful e-learning programme. One of the strengths of the Programme is the way that it uses interdisciplinary expertise from both the Department (e.g. Politics and International Studies) and from external collaborators to expand the thematic and geographic coverage of the Programme. The Programme's teaching team are supported by the University's Distance Learning Unit expertise in organising, managing, and delivering the more challenging e-learning aspects of the Programme. In addition, the Programme is evaluated extensively and effectively (student surveys; assessment of teaching staff performance; trends analysis regarding assessment results and student satisfaction), providing opportunities for changes to address student comments and to ensure a high degree of consistency.

The Programme is managed and delivered by a team of research-active experts from the Department, with the participation of a number of visiting staff from other institutions and the ad hoc contribution of other international experts in particular learning activities and events. The core teaching team consists of four full-time members of the Department from all ranks who evidently work together very well, share a commitment to the Programme's success, and support the entire infrastructure of student learning very effectively. The number of teaching staff is relatively small, although the committee notes the ongoing expansion of the team with new full-time teaching staff to expand the chronological coverage of the Programme. At the

moment, the Programme is heavily focused on Cypriot, Greek, and European history and politics from the late-18th to the late-20th centuries but additional expertise is offered in the field of global contemporary history by other members of the Department, taking advantage of its inter-disciplinary interests and profiles of its members. Nevertheless the committee felt that there were opportunities for an even more ambitious framing of the programme, taking advantage of Cyprus's role in the Middle East and the broader Mediterranean region. This kind of expansion, involving ideally a further extension of the teaching team with new members and areas of broader expertise, would make the Programme attractive to new cohorts of international students without jeopardising the current setup that works very well in terms of attracting students mostly from Cyprus and Greece.

The University and the Department value research both as a standalone field of activity and as a critical component of the success of its teaching activities and the quality of the learning programmes offered. It is clear that the teaching staff's scholarly activities inform productively both the design and delivery of the programme, offering participating students access to knowledge, research opportunities, and activities (talks, seminars, conferences) that support and enrich student learning. The EEC are confident that the research profiles of the members of the Programme's core teaching team are of high quality and suitably relevant to the philosophy and content of the MA. The Programme's learning design ensures that all teaching staff are more or less equally involved in the delivery of the learning components but all the commitments allow time for the pursuit of research activity.

The university has a Distance Learning (DL) unit that provides training for distance learning in terms of seminars, mentoring and technical support to faculty members from various University Schools. Faculty members can participate in training programs to enhance their skills for conducting high-quality online teaching. These training programs are certified as professional development pertaining to distance learning.

Strengths

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

- Collaboration of the teaching team
- Dedication of the teaching team to student support, within and outside the formal parameters of the Programme.
- High-quality of individual research profiles of the teaching staff, with ongoing international research activities
- Rigorous system of evaluation of the Programme
- Comprehensive support in terms of the e-learning component from the University's dedicated units.

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.

Opportunities for extending the coverage of the thematic, geographic, and chronological coverage of the Programme, with potential focus on the Mediterranean dimension of the history of Cyprus, that may tap into different student cohorts and provide a more distinctive character to the Programme.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *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.

The Department provided us with substantial information about the rigorous process of student admission. The process of recording and monitoring student progress is particularly impressive, with a lot of emphasis being put into standardising the process across the university. The methodologies used to benchmark student progress and performance, as well as to identify areas and best practices of intervention where needed.

The university's Moodle platform offers an extensive range of learning analytics tools to monitor student progression and performance. These tools are based on data from students with limited participation or uncompleted activities. However, it remains unclear how instructors use this information to aid their students and the daily benefits derived from it.

Strengths

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

A strength was noted around the low drop-out rate (even though official numbers from this programme were not yet reported). In addition, student feedback is mandatory at course end and is also actively sought on an on-going basis throughout course delivery. However, the effectiveness of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement taken by the university was not clear.

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 encourages the university to implement advanced learning analytics mechanisms, particularly those based on AI and Machine Learning. These tools can monitor and predict student performance and dropout rates, enabling the institution to take proactive corrective actions. Such implementations are highly recommended, especially if the university plans to expand by increasing its academic portfolio or the number of online students.

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

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

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

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

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
 - *Simulations in virtual environments*
 - *Problem solving scenarios*
 - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
 - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*

- *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
- *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *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 e-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.).*
- *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.*

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.

The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a highly detailed weekly student-centred study guides, which include relevant information: objectives, learning outcomes, material to use, activities to perform, and complementary bibliographic references and recommended study time to carry out the proposed activities. In addition, study guides are very well presented in an engaging way, which motivates students in the learning process. This is considered by the EEC as a best practice.

The university has a Distance Learning (DL) unit responsible for providing pedagogical support for the creation and evaluation of online courses. This unit is supported by a Pedagogical Planning Committee, which ensures study materials, interactive activities, and both formative and summative assessments align with international standards. The DL unit also offers a Faculty Handbook, detailing guidelines for distance learning course development and delivery. This handbook is a valuable reference that ensures consistent quality across the University's distance learning courses. Currently, the DL unit is exploring the integration of cutting-edge technologies, such as AI, into their online programs. The EEC acknowledges the efforts and concerns of the DL unit to continuously improve the distance teaching and learning experience.

The EEC was also intrigued to note the way in which some physical meetings were used even in an online programme – this seems a positive development and appeared to be well-received by the students.

Strengths

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

The DL unit is considered a best practice, due to its potential structure, resources, and services devoted to enhanced distance learning. The EEC believes that it can be a powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the teaching provided while offering a solid base to faculty members seeking to enhance their distance learning expertise.

Online courses incorporate a diverse array of multi-format learning materials, including e-books, articles, videos, and audio, all beneficial for distance learning. In addition, recorded teleconferences and video lectures include the instructor in all videos for non-verbal cues and include subtitles for accessibility. The DL unit is exploring the use of interactive videos to enhance engagement among online students during teleconferences, with features like embedded quizzes, navigation options and additional resources. The EEC was very struck at the strong links maintained with those who have finished their studies.

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.

As students have mentioned that the program is demanding, the EEC suggests that some considerations should be given to the workload regarding the study materials and activity completion as well as the preparation for final exams. This is to ensure that the workload is adapted to meet the needs of online part-time students, making it more manageable and suitable for these students' learning style and schedule.

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

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



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.

Overall we can confirm that the programme is compliant with the QAA standards, both in terms of content and of delivery. The e-learning platform worked particularly well and we were impressed by the efforts being made to keep up with good international practice and developing technology.



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Piers Ludlow	
Iakovos Michailidis	
Aristotle Kallis	
Santi Caballé	
Neta Christoforou	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 17.10.2023