

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

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

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

In Greek:

Εξ Αποστάσεως Μεταπτυχιακό στην Ευρωπαϊκή
Πολιτική και Διακυβέρνηση

In English:

Distance MSc in European Politics and Governance

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** Choose status
- **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 External Evaluation Committee, comprised of a Chair, three academic members (including one primarily focusing on distance education), and a student member visited in person the site of Neapolis University in Paphos, having previously been provided in good time a whole range of material relevant to the accreditation of the E-Learning MSc in European Politics and Governance. The range of material we reviewed included the programme of study, course descriptors and CVs of academic staff. Both the University and the Department provided the Committee with detailed descriptions of facilities, programmes, student figures and other relevant material. The Committee met the Rector, Vice-rector, Head of Department, the Programme Director, teaching staff and the e-learning support team. It also met with a group of current students and recent graduates of the programme as well as student support, library and registry staff. The committee visited the campus, department, and library. Where the Committee asked for further documents (i.e. student marks, sample MA dissertations) these were provided promptly.

On the whole, the Committee considered the responsiveness of the Department/University to be excellent and so was the work of the Agency representative who ensured efficient pre-arrival and post-arrival circulation of documents and openness of the on site visit.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Name	Position	University
Dimitris Papadimitriou	Professor of Political Science	University of Manchester
Dimitris Bouris	Associate Professor and Jean Monnet Chair	University of Amsterdam
Nils-Christian Bormann	Professor of International Political Studies	Witten/Herdecke University
Olaf Zawacki-Richter	Professor, DE Expert	University of Oldenburg
Giannis Christodoulou	Student Member	Cyprus University of Technology

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?*

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 study programme and its design are clear. The content of each course is determined by a number of factors such as the tutor, the local context, the discipline, interaction with the industries and topical case studies. There is a quality assurance system in place with appropriate structures, regulations and processes. There is an effort and an emphasis on social engagement, societal relevance and engaging external stakeholders. Events organized are also connected to teaching which is commendable since students always find it interesting to hear from policy-makers or other academics. As such, students benefit also from external expertise and these activities should be reinforced even more. The fact that this is a distance learning programme, makes it easier to involve external speakers and stakeholders. Each module has the same testing structure namely interactive activities, mid-term assignment and a final assessment. There are detailed provisions and rubrics related to grading criteria. There is an effort to make the study guides accessible, friendly and personal.

Strengths

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

The study programme has a number of strengths namely 1) It covers most important themes related to the subject topic; 2) It is delivered in the appropriate way of a distance learning course; 3) It has clear information for students and what is expected from them; 4) Good practices are in place and innovative teaching methods are also deployed in order to activate student engagement and learning.

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.

There are a number of areas which require further improvement.

1) There is room for diversifying the curriculum and teaching offer, such as including more readings on critical perspectives on European Integration and EU External Relations (i.e. gender, race) as well as engagement with more recent scholarship (i.e. beyond intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism) and critical theories such as post-structuralism, feminism and de/post-colonial perspectives. A lot of the mandatory readings rely on textbooks. This is a good starting point especially for students who might be lacking the necessary background. Faculty members should consider a more diverse mix of textbook material and academic journal articles in the mandatory list of readings in order to get a deeper understanding of more current debates.

2) There are overlaps between and among different modules (Theoretical Approaches of European Integration, History of European Integration, European Governance and Negotiation Procedures) which should be avoided especially since students do not have the option of choosing different courses because all of them are compulsory.

3) The curriculum on methods is basic, does not include any sessions on descriptive or even multi-variate statistics, to say nothing of experimental or quasi-experimental research designs. This omission needs to be addressed in a research-oriented Master of Science degree such as this.

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	Partially 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 distance education methodology aims to engage students in authentic and self-regulated learning activities using problem-based learning scenarios, case studies, simulations, and deep interaction with other students and teachers using asynchronous and synchronous information and communication technologies. The pedagogical approach is based on constructivist assumptions that put the students in the center of knowledge construction. Communication and collaboration are constituted elements of constructivist learning environments.

The theory is put into practice using a blended, flipped classroom approach, i.e. an asynchronous online pre-class self-study phase is followed by online mentoring to prepare students for the synchronous session (interactive lectures that encourage discussion, collaboration, and application of knowledge on real-life problems and challenges). According to the study guides, the DL courses run over 13 weeks during the semester with a maximum

of 25 students that are taught by one faculty member. The Learning Management System (LMS) is the open-source system Moodle. Microsoft Teams is used for synchronous video-conferencing.

The expected learning outcomes, course goals and objectives, assignments, information on assessment, a bibliography, a weekly schedule, introduction to the course content supplemental resources, and self-assessment exercises and activities, and self-evaluation exercises are clearly described in a comprehensive study guide available in Moodle, also presented as a “learning path” that guides the students through the process.

Feedback on graded weekly learning activities is provided on a regular basis during the courses using the communication tools in Moodle. Faculty members are expected to respond to student’s questions and postings within 48 hours.

Each course is completed with a final exam that students take online through the use of a designated proctoring tool (Turnitin). The result counts 60 % towards the final grade, another 40 % is graded based on four further interactive learning activities (20 %) and the mid-term assessment (20 % based on a written academic essay of 2.500 – 3.000 words).

The grading scale ranges from 85-100 % (excellent), 65-84 % (very good), 50-64 % (good), 0-49% (fail).

Strengths

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

Learning activities, exercises, and projects are designed to promote collaboration among students in which they apply their knowledge to solve complex problems. A variety of digital tools are used to support collaborative online learning, asynchronously and synchronously. Using weekly topics and assignments in the courses is a good practice in the context of distance learning. The pedagogical concept for online distance learning is based on solid and well-established theoretical foundations.

The small class sizes allow the instructors to work in close contact with the students providing the guidance and encouragement needed especially in distance learning settings.

The students available in the interview appreciated the friendly and proactive support and guidance provided by the faculty members.

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.

Apart from learning together in the online classes, further opportunities for international experiences for distance learners could be explored, e.g. by inviting international visiting experts (virtual internationalization).

The programme could consider utilizing better the university’s external network of partners in the design and execution of its distance learning programmes.

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)

<u>Sub-areas</u>
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 programme is delivered by a mix of campus-based teaching staff (the majority) and visiting/adjunct staff (the minority). Staff-student ratios are good for the programme under examination. All staff are well qualified, all with PhDs, and are deployed in teaching activities that are relevant to their research, with some evidence of research-led teaching. Teaching staff prepare good quality course guides and there is a strong culture of student-centred learning. Although teaching hours per staff range between 6-9 hours a week, a substantial part of staff time is dedicated to student-centred activity if one considers that intensive schedule of providing student feedback and long office hours (available to both on campus and distance students).

The publications profile of staff varies, but overall there is evidence of good research activity in the Department with a developing record of grant capture. Most staff can demonstrate a publication record in recognisable international journals and publishing houses. There is also reasonable evidence of international collaborations, networking and conference attendance.

More relevant to the distance learning programme under accreditation, the university has a robust process of providing new (and existing) staff with training and ongoing support in developing on-line resources. There is a good process of teaching assessment and student feedback that appears to be taken on board in curriculum development. There is mandatory training for all course facilitators on student-centered teaching, learning and assessment (5 hours). The Distance Learning Unit is planning an asynchronous seminar (20-25 hours), Mastering the Art of Blended Learning Facilitation, which will be made available to all faculty members and will be mandatory for those who aspire to become Course Coordinators.

Strengths

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

During the site visit that External Evaluation Committee was impressed by the commitment of all staff to student-centred learning and the principles of distance learning. This was also corroborated with our discussion with students of the programme. There is a good matching of staff research interests and the range of modules offered in the programme. Members of staff appeared satisfied with the management of the department and the way in which the programme under accreditation is designed and implemented. The instructions given to staff on what's required

by the programme were clear. Given the small size of the Department, the support offered to staff by the DLU is excellent.

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.

Although we heard of no complaints of bias in the development of staff pipelines (from recruitment all the way to promotion), we noticed an under-representation of women (or other staff with protected characteristics) at all levels, but especially amongst the leadership of the Department. Care should be taken to ensure that the Department supports gender balance at all ranks. There is evidence of developing research activity in the Department. This needs to be supported and nurtured. The Department does not yet have a standardised sabbatical leave policy and this is something to be considered as a means of supporting research. The Department has a generous arrangement in place for those who are awarded research grants, but if such activity continues to gather pace, it will be worth revisiting current policies so that the benefits of grant capture are shared more equitably across the Department/University. The current provisions on teaching appear to deliver excellent results for students, but they are very demanding on staff time with an inevitably negative impact on non-teaching-related workload. This is an area where the Department can rebalance some of its emphasis in the future (provided that national regulatory requirements are taken on board).

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	Partially compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Partially 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 regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*
regulations

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.

A detailed guide for students has been presented by the administration of the university. The guide is available for students, and it is presented during the induction week. It includes the background of teaching staff, the timeline, the identity of each lesson, the grading and how to use the university tools to make institution's student experience simple. The criteria to attend this course are to hold bachelor's degree in international relations, political science, law, history, sociology, economics or in any other related sector of social sciences with grade 6.5/10. The University also requires advanced knowledge of English language. They provide equal opportunities to all students regardless of their physical abilities.

Most students are young professionals from Cyprus and Greece that work in the public sector and/or international organizations. The admissions process is transparent. Where students do not fulfil all application criteria, for example, due to a different disciplinary background, personal interviews determine their fit. Tutors and an automated "red flag" system track student engagement and participation to ensure progression through the programme. Weekly tasks with clear expectations and swift feedback effectively communicate progress to students. While occurring infrequently in the distance learning master, up to one third of the program's 90 credits may be transferred from other institutions, such as Erasmus partners or previous degrees, in accordance with European guidelines. Final transcripts communicate the degree and grades with a European diploma supplement.

Strengths

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

The MSc program in distance-learning closely guides students through their three-semester journey. An on-boarding week, extensive course documentation, clearly communicated assessment criteria, detailed Moodle pages, weekly assignments including written feedback, a tutoring system, and quick response times by academic and administrative staff all contribute to keeping students motivated and supporting them through the challenges they encounter. A well-equipped library that not only offers a wide range of digitized books and articles but also scans

non-digitized materials upon request provides students with appropriate access to the scientific literature. Counselling service and the student administrative office are similarly available to distance-learning students. A responsive IT team is available to support students and teaching staff to overcome any obstacles that may arise.

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 government mandates a 60% examination for each course. Although students seem to be prepared for the final thesis through the high number of smaller assignments, we recommend that students are given the opportunity to write longer essays in a subset of classes to develop their academic writing.

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)

<p><u>Sub-areas</u></p> <p>5.1 Teaching and Learning resources 5.2 Physical resources 5.3 Human support resources 5.4 Student support</p>

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.

Established in 2010, Neapolis University Pafos (NUP) is a young, private University with around 3.330 students. Nevertheless, the university already has several years of experience in running distance learning programs. NUP has a central Distance Learning Unit (DLU) that supports the students and academics in DL programs. It is responsible for supporting faculty members in designing, planning, and implementing of distance learning programs, as well as professional development and faculty training in distance teaching methodologies. The Director of DLU directly reports to the Rector. In addition, there are two staff members for curriculum design and an educational technologist. The university is currently appointing an additional instructional designer who will strengthen the DLU team.

Course coordinators work together with the learning designer and educational technologist to develop distance learning courses and digital learning materials. There is no special media service unit for audio-visual content production.

The learning management system is the open source software Moodle. Microsoft Teams is used for synchronous teleconferences. The weekly learning path is described in the study guide and presented in Moodle (see Section 2). An academic tutor is available for communication via e-mail or forums. Tutors are expected to respond to student questions within 48 hours.

To ensure the accessibility of the educational material for students with disabilities and special needs, DLU provides a guide for faculty members how to design learning material in terms of text legibility, and navigation in the online learning environment.

Furthermore, 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. In addition to the more generic services, like IT support, library services, etc., include a counselling service (Counseling Center for Research and Psychological Services). Each student has a mentor who helps them to acquire knowledge, understanding and skills that foster learning, engagement and constructive social relationships.

Strengths

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

Students reported that they feel very well supported and are very satisfied with the institutional academic and administrative student support services. The organizational and technical support infrastructure operates professionally.

The infrastructure provided by the university in terms of physical resources (ICT facilities, library services), educational technology infrastructure, and student support services are strong and meet international distance education standards. It is positive that the standards for students with disabilities are respected in the development of learning materials and the overall design of the online learning environment.

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.

There are no serious issues related to the overall DL course development and student support systems. Here are just a few general recommendations:

Given the rapid growth of distance learning and the high workload in this area to provide professional student and faculty support services, the university should consider investing more resources into the DLU. A specialized unit within DLU for audio-visual content development would be helpful. A media production studio could be set up with an educational technologist that supports media development. Opportunities for integrating Open Educational Resources (OER) should be explored.

Opportunities for the professional development of DLU staff should be provided as well to catch up with the latest developments in educational technologies, for example, the new AI applications in education.

With the emergence of generative AI applications in education, policies should be developed and implemented to guide students and faculty on how to integrate the new tools into their learning and teaching practices.

The university should explore methods of learning analytics in a more systematic way to develop an early warning system to identify underperforming students at risk of failure or drop-out.

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.

The University/Department is delivering good results for the students taking this programme and there is evidence of best practice being applied in its distance learning operation. The teaching staff are both very competent and highly committed to support their students. The programme design overall is very good, but there is scope to rebalance the assessment component (i.e. to reduce the extent of marking) and diversify the reading lists. If the university believes that distance learning is going to be a priority area for its future development, we recommend that further investment is channelled to its distance learning infrastructure. The Department appears well run and staff morale is good, although continuing efforts are required to support staff ambitions. The teaching ambitions of the University are now better aligned to the research profile of its staff and this is bound to have a positive impact on student experience, both on the distance learning and on-campus programmes.



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Dimitris Papadimitriou	
Olaf Zawacki-Richter	
Dimitris Bouris	
Nils-Christian Bormann	
Giannis Christodoulou	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 3/4/2023