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External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Neapolis University Pafos
- **Town:** Pafos
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Economics,
Administration, and Computer Science
- **Department/ Sector:** Economics and Business
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα στη Δημόσια Διοίκηση

In English:

Master in Public Administration

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

In Greek: Γενική Διοίκηση, Διοίκηση Υπηρεσιών
Υγείας, Εκπαιδευτική Διοίκηση

In English: General Administration; Public Healthcare
services Administration; Educational Administration



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

Due to COVID-19 constraints, the Application by the School of Economics, Administration and Informatics, Neapolis University Pafos, took place virtually via a Zoom meeting on 7 February 2022.

Prior to the meeting, the EEC had a chance to read Document 200.1 running to 208 pages. The document includes analytical information about the University, School, Department, faculty profile, infrastructure, quality assurance mechanisms, as well as contextual information about teaching and research. Additional documentation was accessed via the cloud and the provision of material was extensive.

Across the day, the EEC met with a full range of institutional leaders and coordinators, as well as a good number of teaching staff, administrative support staff, and current and past students of the programme. The day concluded with an exit meeting and a chance to raise final questions or queries as well as to solicit additional information. The EEC would like to thank the School for its engagement with the process, the extensive information provided and its willingness to provide further data and resources when asked.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Kevin Orr	Professor	University of St Andrews
Steven Van de Walle	Professor	KU Leuven
Vassilis Kefis	Professor	Panteion University
Santi Caballé	Professor	Open University of Catalonia
Artemis Stivaktaki	Student representative	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *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.

The University has an Internal Quality Assurance unit, and information on its functioning is included in the student Handbook.

There is a Committee for Quality Assurance and Internal Evaluation, and there are Committees of Internal Quality Assurance per School.

Students are included in the relevant quality assurance procedures. At the university level, a student representative has an advisory role on the Quality Assurance Committee.

Regular student and course evaluations are conducted and discussed with teaching staff.

Quality assurance is organized using the PROSE system of Integrative Quality Management.

The self-evaluation does not cover the procedure to deal with academic integrity and fraud, or procedures to deal with intolerance and discrimination. The student handbook and self-evaluation only covers issues related to academic cheating and plagiarism, or complaints that mainly relate to the quality of teaching.

The programme fits within a wider university strategy to expand its offer in public administration-related topics

The courses offered cover the main elements that are generally expected in an MPA programme.

There is a logical sequence in the courses offered.

There appears to be a sufficient workload, as evidenced by the week-by-week schedules in the course descriptions and the compulsory literature.

There is considerable variation in the programme objectives between the three specialisations and the overall programme.

The connection between the programme and course objectives is not always sufficiently clear.

There is considerable variation in how course objectives are included in the course descriptions.

Learning outcomes are well-described in the course descriptions, and properly linked to the individual elements of the course assessments.

For each course a variety of assessments is used, and there is a policy to always have an exam accounting for 60% of the grade.

There is an elaborate Student Handbook covering most relevant information.

The information that is provided is sufficiently detailed about the qualification awarded, teaching and assessment procedures, and learning outcomes.

Information on minimal selection criteria is provided (previous degree and language), but not beyond.

Information on pass rates and (potential) graduate employment is not provided

The application did not contain many metrics and quantitative data.

The application does not contain details about the systems to monitor and analyse the programme. The university uses Microsoft CRM, but does not provide further information on how this data will be used or integrated in the monitoring of the programme.

Overall:

In terms of content, this is an attractive programme that covers the key elements one would expect in an MPA programme. The overall programme is well structured.

The quality of the programme is mainly visible in the individual course descriptions, yet efforts are needed to strengthen the formulation of the overall programme objectives and their connection to the individual courses.

The university has all relevant quality assurance procedures in place.

It does a sufficient job in terms of information provision, but there are areas for improvement.

Strengths

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

The programme consists of a coherent set of courses that allow for a broad coverage of the subject matter. Through three specialisations, students are prepared for working in a specific domain in the public sector.

The programme combines more theoretical approaches with more applied perspectives to prepare students for their future work environment.

There is a clear policy to assess each course through a variety of assessment methods.

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 recommends to seek more harmonisation of the programme objectives across the three specializations, and to more explicitly link programme objectives to course objectives.

It is advised to more explicitly communicate to students how they can report instances of unethical (academic and non-academic) behaviour, as well as the appeals procedures that apply.

The EEC recommends to strengthen the information management in relation to student progress and student outcomes, and to communicate these metrics to students

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 postgraduate programme reflects the objectives of the Unit to provide a broad yet critical education with familiarity of ongoing topics, including technology development, policy changes and broader environmental concerns.

Student interaction with Unit staff seems open, as noted by both current and former students, and by Unit staff interviewed. Active actions have been taken to ensure students' progress in the programme, as evident from the support provided. Regular student surveys and an advisory committee are noticeable mechanisms in support of curriculum evolution and delivery.

All courses, core and electives, are evaluated by students taking them every semester using the online system. However, this is conducted just before semester ends which may hinder the opportunity for continuous course improvements as further distance from taken courses may reduce the quality of the responses. There is student mobility through the Erasmus programme, which remains at quite low numbers, both in outgoing and incoming students. The Program has established relations with similar programmes and Units abroad, so there is scope for collaborative expansion.

Regarding Distance Learning:

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 supports online teaching, learning and administrative processes. This is a Moodle installation with all the basic online services available. The platform specifically provides synchronous (through WizIQ) and asynchronous tools to support the interaction needs of students with the lecturers, the other students and with the materials. The platform also provides e-assessment procedures through quizzes with automatic feedback in order to assess students' knowledge. The provision of more complex forms of e-assessment to assess competences and skills, such as critical thinking, is also provided though was not shown the specific assessment procedures during the meetings. Each course has a minimum of 6 hours of synchronous communication (teleconferences) between teacher and students.

Collaboration among teachers and students (and among students) is conducted through the online forums of the subject and other forums that can be created ad-hoc for facing special needs. In addition, collaboration among students is promoted by collaborative activities based on project-based learning, though it was not detailed the design, procedure, and technical support for these activities.

Formative assessment of the courses is based on submitted mid-term assignments and reports with provision of personalized feedback during the course counting to 20% of the final grade while summative assessment is based on a mandatory final exam counting to 60% of the final grade. Assessment procedure during the course is completed with a number of online quiz-based and other interactive activities counting to 20%. Optional formative (self-assessment) activities are included in the weekly study guides in order to self-assess student knowledge and skills of the course.

All courses, core and elective, are evaluated by the students taking them, which provides useful feedback to on student perceptions as well as performance. Also, there is extensive use of online access to course material via Moodle. The Moodle provides students with early and timely access to course material and supports significant flexibility for the student in their preparations for each course, further strengthening the learning environment. There are procedures at the Program to accommodate students with special learning disabilities as well as care for students with disabilities and their access to different spaces of the University. The Program has a Studies Counsellor advising students on issues related to course content, course selection, and processes of course evaluation and grading. Students can also contact Program staff directly for consultation and advising. This was encouraged, as stated by both staff and the interviewed students. It is noteworthy that current and graduated students of the programme highlighted the same high level of staff accessibility and support. Program is making an effort to meet the needs of modern student-centred learning. There is ongoing assessment of the programme, course content and

examination formats. Course changes were made in response to the Covid pandemic with support of the digital platform (Moodle). There is also a clear opportunity to make greater use of the programme alumni in the various courses, as guest speakers and student project expert panellists. For programme content, there are electives offered mostly on the latter stages.

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 duties and need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion. The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a very good student-teacher ratio (1/13) and student feedback is very positive

The provision of personalized 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 recognizes the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities, project based, and discussions organized in online teams. Finally, the 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 is a good practice. Therefore, the university is urged to apply for external accreditations, such as EFQUEL, to evaluate the quality of its distance learning model.

The EEC wants to point out that onsite final exams may not be in line with the learning style of online students, and formative continuous assessment through the writing assignments during the course could be reinforced instead.

From the documentation provided and the information gathered from the meetings, it was not clear if gamification strategies are used to increase the student levels of motivation and engagement with the e-assessment process.

In addition, more sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents are also encouraged to support immediate and automatic feedback to students and self-evaluate their advances.

While the EEC emphasizes the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration, the online synchronous teleconferences and the teamwork among students were perceived as problematic if in the next years the program is expanded internationally and attended by many students across different time zones. It was not clear how the university would support this type of collaboration from the coordination perspective while recommending the constant adaptation of their distance learning model to support this situation by increasing the asynchronous online interaction and collaboration.

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.

3.1.

- All teaching staff holds a PhD in a relevant discipline.
- There appears to be a clear division of work in the management of the overall programme and its specialised tracks.
- Teaching staff in general is research active.
- Many teaching staff have some international experience.
- Visiting teaching staff is included in the programme to provide specialised modules.
- Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.
- General professional and teaching-skills training and development is not systematically offered to (junior) teaching staff. The main channel for professional development is co-teaching.
- There is a formal procedure to evaluate academic staff, which depends to a large extent on teaching performance.

3.2

- There is a sufficient number of core teaching staff to support the programme, across the different academic ranks.
- As the programme is part of a business and economics department, the number of teaching staff with a core specialisation in public administration is limited. This is in particular the case for the specialisations in public healthcare services administration and educational administration.

- Based on the information in Table 3, half the courses in these specialisations (4/8) are taught by visiting professors. Due to several discrepancies between table 3 in the application and the course titles/instructors in the study guides, the EEC was not able to establish with certainty how many courses are (partly) taught by visitors. The visiting staff appear to be well-integrated in the programme, as evidenced by their answers during the onsite visit.

3.3

- Most teaching staff publishes research in the area of teaching, and there are many examples of publications that are closely connected to the courses that are being taught.
- The university collaborates with a limited number of international academic institutions.
- There appear to be many collaborations with other HEI in Cyprus and Greece.

The programme is supported by a sufficiently large number of teaching staff within the Department of Economics and Business. All teaching staff area active researchers in the field.

In general, teaching staff have been allocated courses that align with their research profiles.

For some specialisations, in particular courses in the specialisations and in core public administration, the programme relies on visiting professors, who appear to be well-integrated in the programme.

The university has a Distance Learning unit that provides technical training and support of distance learning to the faculty members of the different University's Schools. Faculty members can participate in training programs to increase their skills to conduct quality online teaching. However, the effectiveness of these training programs in the form of professional development and certification relevant to distance learning was not shown during the meeting with the teaching staff.

Strengths

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

A sufficiently high number of teaching staff which makes the programme sustainable, and provides some security in the case of staff turnover.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

In case of future hiring of new faculty or teaching staff, it is recommended to strengthen the pool of teachers who can cover the topics offered in the healthcare and educational administration, in order to reduce the dependence on a single member of staff.

It is recommended to develop a formal policy and approach to teacher development, in particular for more junior teaching staff.



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 university's Moodle platform provides a wide range of learning analytics tools for monitoring student progression and performance based on collecting information from the student with lower grades, poor participation or with undelivered activities. However, it was not clear the extent the instructors use this information to support their students on a daily basis.

Strengths

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

Student progress is followed electronically through their course and programme performance and there is effort to support those students that fall short of expectations. Course workloads are aligned with international standards. Interviewed current and former students of the programme highlighted the support staff provided them on - or off-student hours for individual courses, as well as ad hoc for selection of specialisation, careers, and external academic activities such as student competitions. Student progress is monitored, and the interviewed staff highlighted that this was given particular focus during Covid pandemic to ensure student could manage. There is a detailed programme of studies on the Program website. The programme of studies contains relevant and important information for the incoming and continuing student populations. The Program participates in the Erasmus+ programme supporting mobility. Many programme graduates find employment in their field of study, so the programme offers strong employment opportunities. The programme study guide includes particular information about the aim, content and structure of the programme and its modules, and describes student related processes and services regarding admission, progression throughout the programme and courses and regulations offered by Program and the University. This seems to be updated regularly, although care must be taken to ensure an ongoing update and review. At the start of the programme students are also informed about course choices, the programme specialisations and other opportunities. Assessment of many courses has expanded beyond a final course exam, including presentations and team projects. This is supported by the availability and use of new technologies. Processes in place help ensure programme regulations and requirements are available in a timely manner to students and staff alike, and documentation needed on course content and results is available.

A strength is noted around the low drop-out rate. 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 shown.

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.

More sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI and specifically Machine Learning are encouraged to be used to monitor and predict student performance and dropout in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures. This is strongly recommended in case of university's expansion plans through increasing the academic portfolio and/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

This was a remote visit but we were able to view guided video tours of the campus during which Committee members were able to ask questions and speak with ICT, library, and administrative staff about the institutional environment and support and resources for students and faculty.

The infrastructure seems to support of the objectives of the study programme. Prior investments in ICT platforms such as Moodle and MS Teams were useful during the pandemic. Staff and students were positive about their experience of using such resources and confident about their ICT capacities. The ICT helpdesk is available 7 days a week.

It is important to ensure that library resource provision is refreshed on an ongoing basis, especially with the pivot away from traditional library materials towards e-books and e-journals. The EEC saw evidence of good infrastructure of professional support resources, such as counsellors and other advisers. We were impressed by the administrative staff that we met, and with their commitment to supporting students and faculty members.

The School and University have ambitious plans for expansions and student recruitment and it is important that the investment in wider learning, teaching and pastoral resources is sustained in line with potentially higher student numbers and cohort sizes.

Regarding Distance Learning:

The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a weekly study guide which are very well presented and includes 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. Each course has an adequate number of hours of synchronous communication between teacher and students.

The university's DL unit is responsible for providing pedagogical support for creating and evaluating online courses. The DL unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities, and formative and summative assessment in accordance with international standards. The DL unit also provides a Faculty Handbook with guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning that establishes the main characteristics a distance learning course should have. It is a good reference that guarantees the quality and homogeneity of the distance learning courses throughout the University's Schools.

Strengths

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

We noted good levels of commitment and enthusiasm among the administrative staff. Our conversation with students (past and present) also provided us with examples of how much students value this support.

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.

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.

It is important that the University continues to adequately invest in the provision of administrative support, in line with the ambitions of the School and the University, and the changing needs and circumstances of students.

While the online courses include a good variety of learning materials (e-books, articles, videos, etc.) which are good for distance learning, the EEC suggests that the recorded teleconferences and video lectures to be usable and accessible for students by making them short (edited), include the teacher in all the videos to provide non-verbal communication, and add subtitles for accessibility.

In addition, the EEC suggest that some considerations should be taken into account to the provision of entire volumes as basic materials in order to adapt them to part-time students who need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion.

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 EEC had a positive remote visit and would like to thank the Agency and the University staff for their support and engagement throughout the process.

The staff at Neapolis University produced helpful documentation for the evaluation and spoke constructively with EEC members during the various meetings.

The EEC saw a commitment to continuous improvement and learning, alongside a pride and confidence in the School's track record.

The University has developed a well-focused MPA programme with three specialised sections covering the main areas of employment for future graduates.

The design of the programme is compatible with the principles of distance learning.

The preceding sections of this Report highlight the considerable strengths of the Programme and the wider Department and institution. They also identify areas for improvement which it is hoped will be useful in focusing further effort and achieving improvements during a time of uncertainty and yet great institutional ambition.

Strengths include:

1. The teaching staff were articulate about the design of the programme and its specialisations.
2. There appear to be good collaborative relationships between the faculty members and the administrative staff.
3. There is a good team ethos between the Course Director and the 3 main coordinators of the specialisations.
4. There is great respect and appreciation on the part of students for the commitment and engagement of the faculty members and administrative staff. In particular students praised the level of access and responsiveness that they experience. The students highlighted that the faculty members and administrative staff are very approachable.
5. In pursuing distance learning, the School is able to draw upon considerable experience among its staff and administrative staff
6. Students currently benefit from a very favourable staff-student ratio
7. The EEC notes the benefits of collaborative learning (including peer review activities) are built into the learning and teaching strategies
8. The Distance Learning Unit is an impressive dedicated resource
9. The MPA is compatible with the changing needs of the public and private sector, and provides good innovations.

Areas for improvement include:

1. In the longer term it is not clear to the EEC what the institution's preferred strategy for faculty recruitment is. Will it use a blend of permanent and visiting faculty, or will it aim to move to staffing the programme through its own permanent staff? This is an important strategic issue to consider. We note the reliance on a small number of faculty for some of the specialisations.

2. The EEC believes that continually evaluating the quality assurance of distance learning by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations is a good practice. Therefore, the university is encouraged to apply for external accreditations, such as EFQUEL, to evaluate the quality of its distance learning model.

3. Onsite final exams may not be in line with the learning style of online students, and formative continuous assessment through the writing assignments during the course could be reinforced instead.

4. The online synchronous teleconferences and the teamwork among students may be problematic if in future years the program is expanded internationally and involves students across different time zones.

5. More work could be done to evaluate the effectiveness of the staff training programmes which aim to develop staff skills around quality online pedagogy.

6. As the programmes expand, there is scope to use sophisticated forms of learning analytics to monitor student performance and inform the support strategies that can be put in place.

7. The EEC recommends to seek more harmonisation of the programme objectives across the three specializations, and to more explicitly link programme objectives to course objectives. More work could be done to streamline and integrate programme objectives with module objectives.



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Kevin Orr	
Steven Van de Walle	
Vassilis Kefis	
Santi Caballé	
Stivaktaki Artemis	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 08.02.2022