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Date: 15/5/2024

External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

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

In Greek:

**Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα στη Βιωσιμη Διεθνη
Διοικηση από Αποσταση**

In English:

International Sustainable Management E-Learning

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek and English
- **Programme's status:** New
- **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 Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) has invited the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) to evaluate the “International Sustainable Management- E Learning” (hereafter referred to as ISM), which is a proposed distance-learning (DL) Master programme to be offered online by the Neapolis University (hereafter referred to as NUP) in Pafos. The EEC consisted of four academics and a student member: the Chair of the Committee Professor Dionisis Philippas (ESSCA School of Management), the members Professor Frank Figge (ESCP Business School), Associate Professor Andrea Thorpe (Universidade Catolica Portuguesa), the DL expert Professor Daniel Riera Terrén (Universitat de Catalunya), and the student representative member Mrs. Elena Onisillou (University of Cyprus).

The evaluation of the programme took place at the Neapolis University premises on May 14th, 2024. Prior to and during the site visit, the EEC was provided with comprehensive documentation and powerpoint presentations used during the day. The EEC met with the senior management team, the faculty, and the DL Unit responsible for delivering the new DL master programme. They also met with administrative and other support staff, as well as 6 undergraduate and postgraduate students from other conventional and online programmes offered by NUP.

During the site visit, the EEC met with: Rector Prof. Pantelis Sklias; Vice Rector of Research and Innovation, Member of QA Committee, and Head of the University’s Research Department Prof. Savvas Chatzichristofis; Member of Departmental Quality Assurance (QA) Committee Prof. Sofia Daskou; programme coordinators Prof. Christos Christodoulou-Volos and Prof. Achilleas Karayiannis; the academic and administrative team of the DL Unit led by Prof. Anastasia Reppa. Additionally, the EEC met with the academic external stakeholders, and some faculty members who will be teaching on the programme.

During the sessions, the senior management team introduced NUP, and the new ISM programme under review. The discussions covered various aspects of the new programme, including its structure and content, academic issues, staff workload and organisation, assessments, available infrastructure and resources, the capabilities of the DL Unit, course delivery, and the sustainability of the programme in highly competitive local and international market. In the next sessions, the EEC had the opportunity to meet with faculty members, administrative staff, and a number of students currently studying at NUP. The final session comprised a meeting with members of the senior management team to address any remaining questions and seek clarifications.

After each presentation, the EEC had the opportunity to engage in a Q&A session to further explore details about the new programme. The questions posed by the EEC were specifically aimed at understanding various aspects of the programme, such as learning objectives (LOs), programme content, delivery methods, assessment approaches, assurance of learning (AoL), IT support, faculty issues, information about the materials provided, and other learning



methodologies. Furthermore, the EEC inquired about the programme's sustainability and the management's strategic plan for its future.

The EEC would like to express its gratitude to Mrs. Emily Mouskou, the CYQAA coordinator, for her efficient management of the process and for her preparation for the evaluation day.

The EEC reviewed and examined the accreditation report and materials regarding the ISM programme provided by Neapolis University.

As detailed below, we conclude with some recommendations regarding the stated criteria, content, and standards of the proposed E-learning ISM programme with respect to its compliance. The EEC has identified specific areas that we strongly recommend improving upon prior to launching the programme.



B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Dionisis Philippas	Professor	ESSCA School of Management
Frank Figge	Professor	ESCP Business School
Andrea Thorpe	Professor	Universidade Catolica Portuguesa
Daniel Riera Terrén	Professor	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
Elena Onisillou	Student Representative	University of Cyprus

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*
 - *is a part of the strategic management of the programme*
 - *focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study program.*
 - *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*
 - *is developed with input from industry leaders and other stakeholders (i.e. industry leaders, professional bodies/associations, social partners, NGO's, governmental agencies) to align with professional standards.*
 - *integrates employer surveys to adapt to evolving workplace demands.*
 - *regularly utilizes alumni feedback for long-term effectiveness assessment.*
 - *is published and implemented by all stakeholders.*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
 - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
 - *Aligns course learning outcomes with student assessments using rubrics to ensure objectives are met.*
 - *Connects each course's aims and objectives with the programme's overall aims and objectives through mapping, aligning with the institutional strategy*

- *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*
 - *collaborates with industry experts for curriculum development.*
 - *conducts joint reviews with external academic specialists to maintain academic rigor.*
 - *performs periodic assessments with external stakeholders to ensure continuous alignment with market needs.*
 - *establishes collaboration with international educational institutions or/& other relevant international bodies for a global perspective.*
 - *conducts regular feedback sessions with local community leaders for societal relevance.*

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

In addition, the program has established mechanisms of transparency & communication to ensure that

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed using specific indicators and data i.e.:*
 - o *key performance indicators*
 - o *profile of the student population*
 - o *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
 - o *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
 - o *learning resources and student support available*
 - o *career paths of graduates*
 - o *industry trend analysis.*
 - o *feedback mechanisms from external partners/stakeholders*
 - o *data exchanges with professional networks*
 - o *employer insights concerning career readiness*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*

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

Findings

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

NUP expects to launch the ISM programme in September 2024, pending approval. The EEC examined all information regarding the admission criteria, the content, learning outcomes, the delivery method of the courses, the assessment procedures, as well as the main DL features of the online learning environment, as demonstrated by the members of the NUP DL unit. The main findings regarding the new programme are as follows:

The ISM programme under review is a 1.5-year programme. It offers instruction in both Greek and English. To earn the programme degree, it requires a successful completion of 90 ECTS points, consisting of 4 core modules in the first semester, and 3 core and one elective (out of two) modules in the second semester, each module valued 7.5 ECTS (8 courses x 7.5 ECTS correspond to 60 ECTS). Some of these LOs specifically concern sustainability (and business management), whilst others refer to business management only. Finally, there is a compulsory dissertation, which is worth 30 ECTS. The expectation is that students should focus on some aspect of sustainability within a business management context and this should be academic in style, rather consisting of a purely applied project.

The EEC thoroughly examined all information concerning admission criteria, curriculum and course learning outcomes (LOs), methods of instruction, assessment tools and procedures, and the main DL features of the online learning environment, as demonstrated by the members of LC. The EEC also had the opportunity to meet with faculty staff who are involved in the coordinating and teaching the programme as module instructors.

The EEC found the admission criteria to be appropriate and aligned with the requirements set by the Cypriot authorities. The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are communicated to the students.

The purpose, requirements, and LOs of the programme are aiming to the needs of Cypriot, Greek and potentially international students.

The EEC identified that there are internal policies and procedures in place with evidence of quality assurance procedures, as part of an ongoing review and development, was provided by NUP, and they are well-aligned with international standards.

The faculty of the programme involves academics who (will) act as online instructors and interact regularly with the students. The staff from NUP is involved in the new programme creation and most of them have teaching experience in (other) online programmes.

The final module grade results from final exams, but also other assessment tools that are in place.

Finally, the University and the Department have provided evidence of international collaborations with regional (margin) European universities, which can provide significant contributions to the quality of the programme.

Strengths

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

The proposed programme has some strengths, as follows:

1. The programme builds on previous experience of other programmes currently running, with learning and operational processes that meet learning expectations and a well-organised DL unit.
2. Management, faculty, and administrative staff appear to be committed to the planning and execution of the new programme.
3. The faculty members that teach this programme's modules are experienced in conventional and online programmes and they have teaching and professional experience that meet the programme's expectations. Many also have international experience.
4. A programme manager who has solid international experience, including sustainability teaching, who appears committed and passionate about the proposed programme.
5. An elaborate quality assurance system, regularly executed, is put in place.
6. The existing sustainability modules are interesting and their interdisciplinary nature appropriate and commendable for a Master programme in sustainability. In particular, the inclusion of a natural science perspective on sustainability is exciting and forward thinking.

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 the programme's structure can be revised in ways that result in better learning offering.

- The programme seems to not have clear learning objectives and outcomes for diverse pool of student, and it is not sufficiently clear how these learning outcomes are mapped to the modules offered and the assessment tools used. A more explicit and consistent mapping would considerably aid the comprehension and execution effectiveness of the programme.
- In the current application, the content and design are problematic in that they reflect a 'Management and Sustainability' programme rather than a sustainability programme as a whole, owing to the number of modules that are not sustainability orientated and which instead reflect dimensions of business management per se. Whilst these undoubtedly have strengths for the University as 'tried and tested' modules on other programmes. Their contribution to this specific (sustainability) programme is problematic. This needs addressing, but there are a several routes that the University can take to rectify this as follows:

- Option 1: Re-design (some of) the modules currently offered.

Some of the modules offered are already mapped to at least one sustainability orientated LO. These should stay as relevant core modules to the programme. However, other modules are only linked to the LOs of the programme that are not concerned with sustainability should be redesigned to that they also refer to sustainability orientated LOs, i.e. that the content of each redesigned module has some sort of sustainability dimension. An exception is the module in Research Methodologies (IS509), which can remain as it is. It is not necessary for each redesigned module to only contain sustainability content; rather a component. This could run as a thread throughout the module, perhaps focusing on one sustainability issue (e.g. resource use), or as a more discreet component within a module (e.g. sustainable procurement covered over a limited number of sessions within an HRM module). These are only examples, however. What is essential is that each course should refer to at least one sustainability orientated LO — it is up to the programme manager and their team to determine the detail as to how this manifests as content. The dissertation should be completed on a sustainability orientated topic.

- Option 2: Keep the programme content as it is , but as a ‘management with sustainability’ programme.

In this option, all modules can be preserved — although, please see our recommendation on introductory material, below — as well as the way in which they are linked to the LOs of the programme. However, its current structure and content strongly suggest a ‘management with sustainability’ programme, rather than one of ‘sustainability management’ per se. In short, the programme is much stronger when presented as the former. Keeping the programme as it is would necessitate a change of name which reflects the duality of the programme offered and this would need to be carefully considered. The dissertation could be completed on either a sustainability or non-sustainability topic.

- Option 3: Keep the modules on sustainability as they are as compulsory modules and widen the number of electives to be taken.

This option is similar to Option 2 in that it would lead to a programme in management and sustainability. Essentially, the current modules that are not orientated on sustainability (e.g. MBA590, MBA584, MBA580, MBA561) would become electives. The university can then draw on other suitable modules from other programmes as electives, which ideally should be a mix of

sustainability and non-sustainability modules. The dissertation could be completed on either a sustainability or non-sustainability topic.

- The recommendations above also impact the name of the programme (currently: "International Sustainable Management"). The name of the programme needs to be aligned with the programme's core educational content and objectives. The current name is ambiguous as it could be misread as a pure management programme rather than a programme that focuses on sustainability. The new title should explicitly reflect the sustainability aspect and enhance the programme's appeal and clarity to potential students and stakeholders.

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.*
- *Detailed schedules in course materials are included, explicitly stating the expected hours for lectures, self-study, and group projects, ensuring transparency in time allocation.*
- *A system is integrated where each learning activity is assigned a weight proportional to its importance and time requirement, aiding in balanced curriculum design.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*
- *The expected hours for different components of practical training, such as lab work, fieldwork, and internships are clearly documented in the training manuals*
- *A weighting system is applied to various practical training elements, reflecting their significance in the overall learning outcomes and student workload.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *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.*
- *The time allocation for each assessment task is explicitly stated in course outlines, ensuring students are aware of the expected workload.*
- *A balanced assessment weighting strategy is implemented, considering the complexity and learning objectives of each task, to ensure fair evaluation of student performance.*

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.

We recognize the suitability of the proposed program for distance learning (DL) delivery. The University has a track record of successfully offering numerous programs in this modality, demonstrating a commitment to providing a good service to students. In this regard, we wish to commend the Distance Learning Unit (DLU) for their excellent work.

The chosen Learning Management System (LMS) for the program is Moodle, which is already well-integrated within the University's ecosystem. Its widespread adoption and stability make it a reliable choice, already familiar to both faculty and students. Additionally, Microsoft Teams is utilized for videoconferencing, alongside various other tools that serve specific purposes.

The program's learning methodology is a blended approach, incorporating both synchronous and asynchronous activities. This includes weekly self-assessment exercises, interactive activities, and a final assessment. Live sessions are conducted biweekly, fostering an engaging learning environment. Collectively, these elements ensure that the program adheres to Cyprus's legal standards for DL programs and promotes continuous learning progression for enrolled students.

Moreover, the DLU oversees the training of faculty in DL methodologies, creating resources such as templates and how-to guides to support their teaching endeavors. This initiative is instrumental in guiding teachers to transcend beyond merely converting traditional lectures into online formats, encouraging them to strategically leverage online tools to enhance student learning.

Strengths

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

All stakeholders within the University appear to be in sync with the distance learning strategy, and it seems there is a consensus among students that they are receiving a high-quality service. For instance, although

the expected response time from teachers is up to 48 hours, students report receiving replies more promptly.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) approves of the selected technologies and methodologies, attributing their effectiveness to thorough deliberation by the academic staff, under the guidance of the Distance Learning Unit (DLU).

The blend of synchronous and asynchronous activities is well-calibrated. Synchronous sessions are concise and thoughtfully crafted to transcend the limitations of traditional lectures, incorporating diverse techniques such as presentations, online quizzes, polls, peer assessments, and the flipped classroom model.

The program includes features like quizzes with instant feedback and other interactive mechanisms to monitor student progress and maintain engagement throughout the e-assessment process.

The University employs a dropout analysis tool that tracks student engagement and flags potential dropout risks. This proactive approach enables instructors to reach out to at-risk students and assist them in re-engaging with their coursework.

In light of the rise of Large Language Models (LLMs) and generative AI systems, such as ChatGPT and Gemini, the University has implemented various tools to verify identity and authorship in student work. The EEC encourages the continued refinement and clear communication of policies to deter academic misconduct, both online and offline, while also educating students on the ethical use of these emerging technologies.

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 committee's primary concern regarding the DL methodology is the inadequate tutor support for part-time distance students. Each course, worth 7.5 ECTS (equivalent to 187.5 hours of student work), combined with a four-course enrolment per semester, results in a total of 750 work hours over 13 weeks. This equates to over 57 hours per week, which we believe is an excessive workload for online part-time students. We recommend a review of the enrolment assessment process and a collaborative effort to synchronize course activity schedules to prevent overlapping deadlines.

It is also crucial to ensure that study guides accurately detail the workload and study time required for each weekly activity, aiding students in effective semester planning.

While live teleconferencing sessions are beneficial, particularly when employing a flipped classroom format and incorporating teamwork, it is essential to consider the diverse time zones of DL students. Currently, this is not an issue as most students reside in Cyprus and Greece. However, we advise the University to anticipate the need to adapt the DL model to accommodate a greater proportion of asynchronous activities.

We suggest that the DLU explore the adoption of advanced feedback mechanisms, such as intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents, to expedite the resolution of student inquiries and facilitate self-assessment of their progress.

Lastly, as this is an international program, we propose that the University consider pursuing external voluntary accreditations (e.g. EFQUEL, EADTU, QS Stars) to further evaluate and enhance its DL quality assurance measures. This would complement the existing cooperative agreements with other European universities.

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	Partially compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Compliant

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The EEC met with the programme coordinator and the faculty members, including both full time and adjunct staff,

who are involved in the new programme. The main findings are as follows:

- The EEC noted that NUP provides technical training and support for distance learning to faculty members, to enhance their ability to deliver quality online teaching.
- The programme is supported by faculty members (the majority) involved in both the conventional and online similar programmes, who all possess teaching and professional experience.
- The teaching staff members of the Department have been active in preparing the programme's material and syllabi. The programme is also supported by the DL Unit of the University and administrative services.
- The criteria for promotions, budget allowances, and workload are well-established and clearly communicated to the teaching staff.
- Based on the available evidence, the faculty is involved in research activities and is keen on further developing their research portfolios.

Strengths

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

The EEC found the following strengths during the Q&A session with the faculty members:

- Most of the faculty members involved in the new ISM programme are experienced instructors in other conventional and online programmes.
- The link between research and education is established where faculty uses their own research results to improve teaching effectiveness (i.e., case studies, published results).

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 suggest some areas of improvement, as follows:

- The EEC suggests that the NUP should provide further support of the research agenda for the teaching staff and encourage all faculty in a more active involvement in research activities. This could involve the establishment of proper incentives, data availability, and the encouragement of research cooperation domestically and abroad.

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 EEC met 6 students, coming from other conventional and DL programmes, currently running in NUP. The EEC asked them about their experiences, why they chose NUP, and what they like (or don't like), as well as how the courses are/were delivered in a DL mode. In general, the EEC noted that students are mostly positive about their studies, the programme they follow(ed) and the support received.

The student admission requirements as well as the programme's outcome seem to be clear to all students and in line with the criteria set by the Cypriot High Education framework. These are communicated by the University to prospective students.

As the students mentioned, the course tutors as well as the administrative personnel are helpful and supportive of their needs. However, they mentioned a main drawback is the unexpectedly high number of assignments. This is lack of communication between the students and the NUP staff.

The students appear to be supported by the University in terms of teaching materials, IT support, and library access in existing programmes.

The student selection has an open approach allowing applications from different fields in public and private sector (particularly from Cypriots and Greeks). This increases the interdisciplinary focus of the programme.

Among the primary motivations of students in studying at the DL programmes was locality, the distance learning (flexibility) and the NUP brand.

Strengths

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

Based on existing programmes and general NUP strategy, there are adequate processes for admission, monitoring, and certification of student progress and achievements.

There are processes to foster internationalization of the student body (e.g., Erasmus).

The students pointed out the flexibility of the DL programs and this is a feature that gives advantage to the new programme under review.

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.

Some minor areas of improvement are after below:

- A main drawback identified is the workload and assessments required of students, which exceed expectations and demand much more personal effort than students can manage. This excessive burden might hinder their ability to achieve the learning outcomes.
- The EEC was told that students benefit from a very good student-lecturer ratio (1/13) which is very positive. However, during the meeting, no evidence was provided of how this ratio was calculated.

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.*
- *Students receive support in research-led teaching through engagement in research projects, mentorship from research-active faculty, and access to resources that enhance their research skills and critical engagement with current studies.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*

- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

Findings

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

As outlined in Section 2, the University's DLU is tasked with providing pedagogical support for the design, creation, implementation, and evaluation of online courses, as well as delivering training to educators. The DLU establishes universal criteria and develops guides and templates to assist teachers in their roles.

Each proposed course is accompanied by a comprehensive and weekly study guide that includes essential information such as a summary, introductory remarks, aims/objectives, learning outcomes, keywords, and lists of required and supplementary multimodal materials, along with self-assessment exercises and activities.

The University extends a full library service to students, granting access to a plethora of publications both online (through a VPN) and in physical form. In the absence of a digital version, students may request a scan of up to 20% of a book, which is delivered via email within 48 hours.

The physical infrastructure aligns with the University's mission and needs. For DL programs, the virtual campus leverages Moodle technology, and Microsoft Teams is utilized for meetings. Both platforms meet the expected standards to provide exemplary service to students. Additionally, the University offers individual licenses for software necessary to cultivate practical skills relevant to their programs, such as SPSS and SAS.

Student feedback is systematically gathered at the end of each semester through a mandatory questionnaire. This feedback is instrumental for teachers to refine their courses.

The Student Affairs Office (SAO) addresses student inquiries and grievances, predominantly concerning visa issues and evaluation matters.

Strengths

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

As highlighted in Section 2, the DLU is recognized as an outstanding team dedicated to providing excellent services to both students and faculty. Moreover, other departments such as IT, the library, registry, and the Student Affairs Office (SAO) are also highly committed to supporting the University's mission.

Students enjoy convenient access to essential resources (e.g., digital documents, specialized software) necessary for their educational journey. They also benefit from prompt responses to their administrative and academic inquiries.

The University is proactively utilizing data analytics to enhance its services. The strategic use of student feedback and dropout prediction analytics is testament to the institution's commitment to continuous improvement.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

As previously mentioned, the EEC emphasizes the importance of accurately estimating the study time for each piece of weekly study material and activity. This will provide students with a transparent understanding of the expected workload for each course.

DL necessitates a foundational level of digital literacy. While the University acknowledges this requirement and may provide some support to new students, the EEC strongly recommends the implementation of targeted, brief introductory courses. These courses should be designed to equip students with the necessary digital skills, ensuring they can fully concentrate on their chosen program from the outset, particularly during their first semester.



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 International Sustainable Management E-Learning is a new distance learning programme offered by Neapolis University in Pafos. It has a 1.5-year content, design, and structure. The EEC acknowledges the significant effort made in preparation for the launch of the new DL programme. This included the development/modification of the University's online platform, the enrichment of faculty members' expertise, the quality assessments, the design of programme structure, and a curriculum that aligns with comparable programmes. Support for the programme comes from the University's Distance Learning Unit and their administrative services.


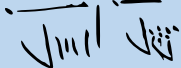



Nevertheless, to establish the sustainability and the competitive advantage of the new programme over the coming years, and considering the recent developments and competition, the EEC has identified areas of improvement. We have elaborated on these recommendations in each section above, highlighting where further development is recommended.

The EEC would like to thank all involved in Neapolis University for their high engagement throughout the evaluation process - and for providing a rich set of supporting documents and access to videos before and during the site visit. We also want to thank them for their great hospitality.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Mrs. Emily Mouskou for organizing and facilitating the evaluation process.


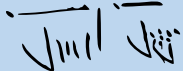





E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Dionisis Philippas	
Frank Figge	
Andrea Thorpe	
Daniel Riera Terrén	
Elena Onisillou	

Date: 15/5/2024

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