

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:** Open University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School/Faculty
- **Department/ Sector:** Department/Sector
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Διοίκηση, Τεχνολογία και Ποιότητα (1.5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό, Εξ αποστάσεως)

In English:

Management, Technology and Quality (1.5 academic years, 90 ECTS, Master of Arts, E-Learning)

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

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



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

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) would like to thank the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) for the invitation to evaluate the Masters in Management, Technology and Quality offered by the Open University of Cyprus (OUC) (Faculty of Economics and Management). This is an online distance learning program.

The EEC consisted of four academics with relevant disciplinary expertise to the programme evaluated and expertise in distance learning/online programs, as well as a student representative.

The evaluation took place online in December 2022, as per the schedule arranged by the CYQAA. The agenda featured several meetings with the Rector, Vice Rector of Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management, Academic Coordinator, various members of the teaching faculty and administrative personnel and current students/alumni.

The meetings and the evidence provided in the form of the self-evaluation report, presentations and additional documents offered sufficient information for the EEC to compile this report.

The report discusses in detail areas of strength and areas that need significant improvement to further develop the distance learning Masters in Management, Technology and Quality. The EEC report provides constructive suggestions as to how the OUC can address the points raised and strengthen the program.

The EEC is at the disposal of the CYQAA should there be any queries about the report submitted.



B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Savvas Papagiannidis	Professor	Newcastle University
Christothea Herodotou	Professor	Open University UK
Ernst Verwaal	Professor	KU Leuven
Matthias Beck	Professor	Cork University
George Aristotelous	Student Representative	Cyprus University of Technology

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*
- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
 - (a) sub-areas*
 - (b) standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
 - (c) some questions that EEC may find useful.*
- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*
- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*
- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*
- *The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.*

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
 - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
 - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
 - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
 - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
 - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
 - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

- *The programme of study:*
 - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
 - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
 - *benefits from external expertise*
 - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
 - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
 - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
 - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
 - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
 - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*

- *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
 - *key performance indicators*
 - *profile of the student population*
 - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
 - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
 - *learning resources and student support available*
 - *career paths of graduates*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

Findings

The MSc in Management, Technology and Quality is a programme that is currently on offer. This is a distance learning programme that lasts 1.5 years (3 semesters). The average duration of student enrolment is about 2 years 3 months. There are also students who may need up to 4 years to complete the programme.

The programme is offered in Greek with 90 ECTS. The programme aims to offer students an opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in all three areas of the program. A balanced approach among the three areas of the programme has been adopted when it comes to the distribution of modules. All modules are compulsory with the exception of the internship module. The programme provides a basic introduction into knowledge and skills needed in the three areas that the programme covers.

The University has a number of policies in place to ensure quality assurance that operates in a way conducive to the mission and vision of an Open University. New programmes or changes to existing programmes have to go through the QAA process. QAA policies cover areas such as programme development, plagiarism practices, student progression, and ECTS credits. There are mechanisms in place for students to provide module feedback.

The necessary information about the programme and modules, admissions and tutors is available on the University's website.

Considering that the program's language is Greek, students are primarily based in Cyprus (about 50%) and Greece. A small number of students from other countries have also been enrolled in the programme. The vast majority of the students are employed, e.g. in civil service, in engineering, health or science roles. As this is a conversion programme, for most students the areas covered are relatively new. The flexible learning nature makes it possible to continue working while studying, with potential positive spill-over effects during the period of study. Students may have managerial experience and may want to extend their knowledge and skills in a more structured and formal manner.

Given the nature of the delivery of the programme, opportunities for exchanges are not as relevant, as there may be to other conventional delivery modes/programmes.

Strengths

There are policies in place with regards to quality assurance. There are also policies governing teaching and learning aspects such as plagiarism.

The modules currently on offer, aim to provide students with the fundamental/core knowledge in each area covered.

The way that the OUC operates when it comes to recruiting and utilizing adjunct staff is conducive to bringing external academic expertise into the programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Programme objectives need to be streamlined. In turn, such objectives could also be mapped against each of the modules.

Considering that this is a conversion masters and most students have little knowledge in the areas covered, the level at which modules are pitched is relatively speaking a basic one. This means that the modules are difficult to differentiate from similar offers elsewhere or may not be seen as attractive. In turn, when put together the modules put forward do not help the differentiation or distinctiveness of the programme as a whole. Updating the modules can help the programme remain current and consistent with developments in society.

The modules need to be refreshed and to feature more up-to-date resources. Having the majority of resources (as presented in the self-evaluation report) being pre-2010 is problematic. For example, books/resources on security, marketing and ethics that are 10+ years old do not reflect the latest thinking, practice and contextualisation that will encourage students to engage with them.

The Committee notes that the module handbooks are based on Greek/translated textbooks. One can appreciate that there may not be as many recent resources/textbooks in Greek as there are in English. Hence, the available options may appear to be limited and dated. Still, this restriction should not be allowed to be detrimental to the learning experience. In the fast-moving era, one can not afford for translations to become available and integrated into modules.

The links among the modules in each of the three areas of the programme, but also among the three pillars should be clarified and highlighted to both students and instructors. On one hand, such a mapping will help the programme team create a more coherent narrative as to the program's position in the market. On the other, it will make it possible to ensure that module delivery is not undertaken in isolation, but in a way that makes a wider contribution to the overall programme.

With the above in place, it should hopefully become more feasible to attract a higher number of students, making the programme a more sustainable one. Bigger student numbers could justify adding optional modules to the existing structure that will help strengthen the programme.

A similar mapping against intended skills development and assessment could also be undertaken.

The committee notes that the programme team would like to reduce the weighting (%) of the final exam and replace it with other more interactive forms of assessment. The EEC believes this to be a requirement justifying the online delivery of the program and one that can help diversify the assessment strategy and practice.

Students find the dissertation module an interesting one that makes it possible for them to research a given topic of interest in depth. As it stands though, there is little formal training in research methods. As many students do not have a background in social sciences, dissertation supervisors have to support the students' quantitative and qualitative research skills development. Instead of such an inefficient arrangement, it is recommended that either a new module is added or that at least a research methods resource is available to all students. Supervisors can then direct students accordingly, saving time and effort that could be redirected towards the research and supervision process.

It is positive to see that the vast majority of students are employed and often use their work context as a platform on which to stage their work (e.g. for their dissertations). Links to work and practice need to be exploited more effectively. They can enhance student learning experience and employability prospects. They can also provide insights into the programme by practitioners. Such insights can offer valuable feedback as to the programme's developments. More broadly, it may be useful to more actively engage, even in an informal manner, an external advisory board consisting of practitioners and other stakeholders in the areas covered by the program.

As the majority of the students are working and have other responsibilities, it is important to keep them engaged at regular intervals. Engagement needs to be monitored throughout the programme. This can help ensure that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS. Equally importantly, it can help ensure the smooth progression of students through modules.

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	Partially compliant

2. Student – centered 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.*

Findings

An online platform (eClass) is used to deliver teaching and learning supported by tools such as video conferencing and plagiarism detection. Plagiarism detection is currently not effective in the Greek language and therefore it is difficult to include assignments in the final evaluation of the students.

There is provision for the delivery of five synchronous online meetings between students and tutors (in five separate weeks). The rest of the time, students are expected to independently study, by mainly engaging with one or more readings per week and accompanied slides (when available) hosted on the platform. In some modules, there are links to videos and a forum activity about the topic of the week. Overall, there are limited opportunities for interactive activities, such as topic-specific forum discussions, quizzes, access and reflection on multimedia resources, use of simulations/modeling apps and latest developments in online learning such as the use of virtual and augmented reality apps and game-based learning.

Online tutorials resemble lecture-style sessions with questions raised by the tutor and answered by students. These sessions should be used to answer student questions, clarify misconceptions and expand their understanding, and for students to present their work. There is forum functionality on eClass for interactions between students, students and tutors and the program as a whole. Yet, these are not utilized or embedded into weekly learning activities. Students, during the interviews, were not aware of them or used them to communicate and support each other.

Each module has its own study guide with details such as learning objectives, material and what activities/readings to do per week. An inconsistency was observed between the reading and multimedia resources proposed in the study and program guides and those accessible via the eClass platform. The latter does not include proposed multimedia resources embedded into learning activities. There is an intention to update the material by the end of each term. Yet, there is no written documentation detailing the process and responsibilities or any examples of how material has been last updated.

In terms of training and guidance, there should be more support to students as to the available eClass affordances and how they could be used to develop their learning and interaction with peers and tutors from a distance. There is guidance about students with disabilities mostly relevant to formative assessment. Guidance should be extended to reflect how students with disabilities should engage with weekly learning activities, especially given the online delivery of the program.

Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set and implemented.

Modules are mainly structured around students' theoretical engagement with topics under study. There is the option of an industry placement (only available in Cyprus) at the end of the three semesters that could provide students with practical experiences. Yet, this is an optional component of the masters that is not assessed. Also, it is not connected to any module activities and assessments. For instance, there are no reflective exercises that would enable students in an industry placement to reflect on their experiences and relate these to their theoretical understanding of specific master modules. Learning objectives and associated activities related to practical training should be embedded in the design and delivery of proposed modules. For example, activities should be designed in ways that build and expand on the working experiences of students, as these would be opportunities to associate practical experiences with theoretical understandings.

Student assessment is based on the production of two assignments (30% of final grade) and a final exam (70%). The assessment objectives, submission processes and criteria for marking are detailed in the module study guides. During the visit, staff members declared their intention to amend current assessment practices by reducing the final exam weighing to 60% and adding a 10% weighing for interactive activities. Overall, assessment is based on traditional means of marking, and it is rather not leveraging the added value of online delivery for assessment. For example, tutorial attendance and participation in relevant activities during tutorials are not weighted in the assessment. Such an approach could encourage students to attend and actively participate in tutorials. Similarly, forums could be used to host learning activities with a requirement for students to read and respond to questions posed by their tutors and other students. This would encourage communication and development of a community of learning amongst students and tutors.

Assessments and dissertations are marked by a single examiner. The process of preparing a dissertation is in close collaboration with a staff member, who in some cases is the same person assessing the dissertation. Given the above, dissertation marking should be carried out by more than one examiner to ensure objectivity and independence.

A procedure for students' appeal is in place. As a mitigation strategy, students who fail or cannot attend the final exam are offered the option to attend a repeated exam on a scheduled date.

Feedback to assignments is both numerical and narrative. There are some suggestions as to how certain aspects of an assignment could be improved, yet those suggestions are not always clearly explained or specific enough or they point to an example response shared by the tutor. Feedback should be seen as an opportunity for students to develop their writing and argumentation skills. Hence, it should be specific enough with clearly stated directions of what a student should do in subsequent assignments in order to achieve a better grade (feed forward recommendations). There should be a written guidance as to how feedback should be provided to students to ensure consistency in feedback provision across all modules.

There is no provision for students to receive research training or be actively involved in research. There are no opportunities for students to engage critically with current bibliography, reflect on and present it.

Strengths

An online platform (eClass) is used to deliver teaching and learning supported by tools such as video conferencing and plagiarism detection.

Each module has its own study guide with details such as learning objectives, material and what activities/readings to do per week.

There is consideration of students with disabilities and a guide of how to support them mainly in writing assignments and taking part in exams.

A procedure for students' appeal is in place.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

There needs to be more and systematic opportunities for interactive weekly activities, such as topic-specific forum discussions, quizzes, that are also assessed.

The purpose of online tutorials need to be reconsidered to enable elaboration on readings, answer student questions, clarify misconceptions and expand understanding.

Forum functionality needs to be leveraged to support 24/7 communication and interactions between students and students and tutors.

There should be a process in place for reviewing and updating module material by the end of each term.

There is a need for providing training to students as to how to make use of the full functionality of the eClass platform and how this can support their learning and interactions with others.

Learning objectives and associated activities related to practical training should be embedded in the design and delivery of proposed modules.

Student assessment needs to be revised to include participation in forums, engagement during online tutorials and completion of interactive activities.

A process of how feedback to student work should be provided is needed.

There is a need for developing master students' research skills.

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-centered teaching methodology	Partially compliant
2.2	Practical training	Partially compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Partially compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Partially 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.*

Findings

The OUC has transparent and clear procedures for the recruitment and development of teaching staff.

New teaching staff members receive training e.g. completion of two courses about online teaching, but there is no clear process that ensures regular professional and teaching skills training and development. This can be problematic because the OUC has access to advanced and innovative distance learning technologies that may not be fully exploited if not combined with regular training and development of the teaching staff.

The OUC has competent adjunct staff but no clear process that ascertains a connection between research in their specific field and the educational content.

Strengths

The teaching staff in the program is competent in their area of expertise. All members of the permanent and adjunct staff have a doctorate degree. Many of the teaching staff have good publication records and extensive teaching experience.

The hiring process is transparent and new staff receives guidance and support.

The teaching staff are active researchers with publications within the discipline they are teaching.

The teaching staff is systematically evaluated on teaching performance and provided with relevant feedback.

The technical infrastructure for distance learning is well developed.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

There is no clear process to ensure a strong link or connection between the programme and research. The OUC could set up research seminars that are linked to the content of the courses and to which students are also invited.

The teaching staff should be regularly engaged in the professional and teaching-skill training and development.

The OUC has a relatively small number of permanent staff and does not have a clear policy to ensure that permanent teaching staff has a protected 35% of their workload allocated to research.

If feasible, the OUC should increase the ratio of permanent/adjunct staff and permanent staff should only coordinate programmes in their specific area of expertise.



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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published 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.*

Findings

The entry criteria with regards to the first degrees are clearly defined.

Despite the fact that this is a master degree delivered in Greek, students should be expected to have adequate skills to read and understand English texts, in order to be able to effectively engage and judge current research in the field that is most likely published in English. Follow-up activities related to English literature such as summaries, presentations or critical elaboration, could be made in either Greek or English. As this is a master's degree, such a condition should be a requirement in order to meet the level and standards of master provision.

There are regulations as to how students should be assessed (formative and summative assessment) which motivate participation and progression through a module. No tools are used to capture and act on student progression, although the eClass platform has functionality for capturing student interactions with the platform. Such tools should be made available to tutors with guidance as to how they should be used to support students, especially those who are less engaged with the module activities.

The recognition and certification policies, processes and practices are in line with the EEC expectations.

Strengths

The entry criteria with regards to the first degrees is clearly defined.

There are regulations as to how students should be assessed (formative and summative assessment) which motivate participation and progression through a module.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The admission requirements for the study are in principle appropriate when it comes to the degree requirement. Still, the committee notes that English language is only recommended but not an essential criterion. This could be reviewed with clear guidance as to the expectations (e.g., a specific level of comprehension when it comes to reading) to ensure that there is a minimum of consistency among students. This can help establish a common baseline and extend the scope of included resources that all students can refer to.

There is a need for tools to capture and act on student progression, such as data analytics collected by the eClass platform and associated policy on how to act upon these data.

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	Partially compliant
4.2	Student progression	Partially 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.*

Findings

There is a pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of online learning, while it also does research on e-learning technologies. The unit could provide further assistance by reviewing module structures in terms of interactive elements and proposing ways a module could be enhanced to meet the standards of online provision. The unit could also provide professional development seminars to staff about emerging technological developments such as game-based learning and simulation-based learning and how they could be leveraged to enhance the student experience.

While there is a structured study guide for each module, with required and optional readings and in some modules, recommendation links to multimedia, there is no weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises such as use of topic-specific forums, web-based simulations/modeling apps relevant to content, quizzes, student online presentations or video recording. The use of forums is rather limited. There are no instructions on how to create posts, discussions and provide feedback to posts of others. There are self-assessment exercises on a weekly basis, yet responses to these exercises are not provided online (they are ad-hoc, should a student request a response by a tutor). These exercises, for example, could be presented in the form of a quiz with answers revealed when a student needs to find an answer.

Overall, there is no agreed and standardized process of how online structure and delivery of modules should look like that would ensure all modules provide a similar online learning experience for students.

Students are supported by their tutors on an ad-hoc basis, during tutorials, office hours and email communication. There is no provision for proactive (as opposed to reactive) student support that would enable tutors to be aware of how students are progressing with their studies and engaging with suggested study material. Data analytics captured by eClass could be made available to tutors to give them insights of what students are doing while self-studying. A framework of how tutors should respond to cases of students who are not engaging with the material would be helpful. Such a framework should detail the points of contact of tutors with their students (beyond the 5 scheduled online meetings) such as when students should be emailed by tutors and for what purpose. Waiting for students to submit their first assignment and intervene in cases of non-submission, likely contributes to student drop-outs. Therefore, support and intervention strategies should be in place to help students to engage with the material right from the start of the program and throughout each module duration.

The OUC issues open calls for adjunct staff every three years. Staff are evaluated and ordered based on a number of different criteria. In turn, depending on the delivery needs they are selected to teach a module. Such a flexible model of recruitment is necessary to accommodate fluctuations in student numbers and changing circumstances of adjunct staff.

The EEC's overall impression is that all the physical and human support resources are in place and are functional. The library is well equipped, as it participates in the Cyprus wide network of university libraries. The University has a dedicated team providing e-learning support.

Strengths

There is a pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of online learning, while it also conducts research on e-learning technologies.

There appears to be a 2.5:1 administrative to academic staff. Such a ratio should be conducive to covering all operation aspects sufficiently.

Academic workload policy appears to be in line with expectations.

The OUC appears to have the expected infrastructure (e.g. ICT, library facilities) required for the delivery of online programmes.

There is provision for supporting students through office hours and email communication.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

There is no agreed and standardized process of how online structure and delivery of modules should look like that would ensure all modules provide a similar online learning experience for students.

There is not enough usage of online functionality such as forums, simulations, and weekly interactive activities that would transform the traditional learning experience into an online one (with accompanied added benefits and value).

There is a need for providing proactive support to students to engage them with the program activities from start to end.

More permanent academic staff with different areas of expertise would have been welcome. Members of staff can then supervise programmes that are sufficiently close to their areas of expertise.

More academic staff can also help keep workload to an appropriate level, ensuring that staff can invest quality time in research and scholarship.

The links between the programme and the e-learning support team need to be strengthened.

Adjunct staff should be kept updated as to the services on offer and encouraged to make the most out of them. This will help enhance the delivery of the modules and in turn the whole programme.

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	Partially compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

The report presents the findings, strengths and areas of improvement for the distance learning MSc in Management, Technology and Quality offered by the Open University Cyprus. The EEC hopes that the report provides useful recommendations when it comes to improving the program's prospects and that increases its student and market appeal.

Finally, the committee would like to thank the CYQAA coordinator for managing the process efficiently and effectively. If there are any clarifications necessary, the EEC will be more than happy to provide additional information as per necessary.

E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Savvas Papagiannidis	
Christothea Herodotou	
Ernst Verwaal	
Matthias Beck	
George Aristotelous	

Date: 06/12/2022