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Date: 14 November 2023

External Evaluation Report (Distance Learning Programme)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Frederick University
- **Town:** Limassol, Cyprus
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School of Business and Law
- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Maritime Transport and Commerce (in collaboration with the Department of Law)
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Ναυτικό Δίκαιο και Ναυτιλιακή Διοίκηση

In English:

Maritime Law and Shipping Business

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



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].

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations

A. Introduction

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) comprised of 4 members, George Theocharidis, Nikolaos Papapostolou, Andromachi Georgosouli, Santi Caballe, Neofyta Christoforou (student representative), was invited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) to assess the LLM Maritime Law and Shipping Business (distance learning) proposed by the Frederick University, Limassol. The evaluation took place at the premises of Frederick University (hereafter “University”) in Limassol on the 13th of November 2023.

The EEC met with the Vice President of the Council, Dr. Christoforos Charalambous and the Vice Rector QA and Academic Excellence, Prof. Costas Kyriakou and others as below and the information technology experts responsible for supporting the distance learning format of the programme. In addition, the EEC had the opportunity to have constructive discussions with the members of teaching staff and administrative personnel, as well as with graduate students in e-learning and conventional programmes. The EEC also had a physical tour in the University’s infrastructure and facilities. To facilitate the process of evaluation the University have provided the EEC with additional evidence upon request.

In this evaluation report we present the findings of the EEC committee, the strengths of the programme and the University and areas that need further improvement. The EEC provides constructive feedback and makes several suggestions to the University for improvement.

The EEC remains at the disposal of the CYQAA and University for providing clarifications regarding this report. Finally, the EEC would like to thank the CYQAA for the invitation to evaluate this programme, and the members of the University for their hospitality and cooperative spirit on the day of the evaluation.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
George Theocharidis	Professor	WMU
Nikolaos Papapostolou	Reader	City University, London
Andromachi Georgosouli	Associate Professor	Queen Mary, London
Santi Caballe	Professor	Open University of Catalunya
Neta Christoforou	Student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

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

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

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

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

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
 - *key performance indicators*
 - *profile of the student population*
 - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
 - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
 - *learning resources and student support available*
 - *career paths of graduates*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

Findings

The Master of Laws (LLM) in Maritime Law & Shipping Business is a currently operating programme in an e-learning format by the University. The EEC expects that this programme will primarily attract interest from the Cypriot and Greek markets; however, considering that this is an e-learning programme the University could expand in the near future and offer the programme in English speaking candidates from other countries. The EEC believes that the qualification of LLM (distance learning) awarded by the University meets the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

The EEC believes that the core content and structure of the programme is similar to other LLM programmes offered in other EU countries and the UK. The programme in its current format provides the necessary disciplinary knowledge and skills needed for professional development in the area of Law at Master level. The EEC enquired about the programme's learning outcomes, teaching approaches, and assessment procedures. The programme coordinator and teaching team provided sufficient evidence of such information. Pass rates and employment information was provided.

With regard to the structure and design of the programme, the EEC applauds the University and teaching staff for their efforts to develop a programme that is current and reflective of the recent legal and business trends. The EEC deems the list of elective courses offered in the programme as sufficient but more elective courses could be added to include contemporary areas of legal interest, such as Environment Regulations from IMO (e.g. MARPOL Annex VI dealing with decarbonization in shipping), Paperless Trade (e.g. e-bills and other electronic transactions). In addition to the structure and design of the programme, the EEC have identified some issue concerning the allocated ECTS credits to certain elective modules. Even though we were informed by the University that the ECTS units correspond with each module's: (a) expected student workload and (b) exams and assignments content, we were not provided any evidence that justify as to why a unit holds 6, instead of 8 ECTS units respectively.

Important information about the programme, its content and structure, admission criteria, fees etc. is publicly available on the University's website. The EEC has observed that the University has several policies in place to ensure quality assurance. Any new programmes or changes to existing programs have to go through an internal process and they are subject to approval. For distance learning programmes this also involves obtaining feedback and responding to the guidelines provided by the Distance Education Unit which makes recommendations and suggestions for consideration. Good practice recommendations can then be tailored to the program as per necessary.

In addition, the EEC has observed that there are mechanisms in place, such as the student course feedback for individual research assignments but we were not provided with sample answers, that can help shape future policies.

Student feedback about the course is actively sought through online anonymous survey at the end of the course. Regarding the mandatory completion of the survey before grades are released, the EEC submits that as long as students are given freedom on the substance of the survey, it is acceptable to link it to the release of the grades. However, evidence of the effectiveness of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement and action plans taken by the University, were not provided during the evaluation.

Strengths

The programme under evaluation appears to have specific and realistic intended learning outcomes. It seems that it was designed with the vision of the school in mind.

The elective courses add value to the programme subject to the comments above.

Information about the programme of study is clear, accurate, and readily accessible for prospective students, especially those with non-legal background. An introductory course on fundamentals of shipping adds high value to the programme, especially for the latter students

A distance learning LLM is a programme of particular interest to individuals who are already working and would like to develop further. The flexible learning nature makes it possible to continue working while studying with potential positive spill-over effects during the period of study.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC requested and was provided with the Policy and Process of Preventing and Dealing with Plagiarism. The text was reviewed and while there is a policy in place on how an assessor can detect what amounts to plagiarism, there are no specific rules in ascertaining the type and gravity of an act of plagiarism and how it will be sanctioned (i.e. the percentage of mark deduction according to the committed act). The same should be introduced in the Student Handbook

The EEC recommends the University to reconsider the allocation of ECTS units per module and provide evidence that justify the discrepancies in allocation.

After reviewing the submitted application and the supportive documents there was no evidence of existence of a Research Ethics Committee to ensure that research is carried out according to protocols, especially the management and destruction of information upon completion of research.

Regarding feedback, it must be stated that during the formative period the students receive feedback in their assignments, however, although we asked for sample assignment papers, we did not receive any. Therefore we are not in a position to evaluate the content and substance of the feedback. Feedback during the summative period is not necessary, therefore the matter is not addressed, but the appeal process, especially the grounds for rectification of mistakes and re-evaluation is not clear and comprehensible, especially the grounds for appeal.



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

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

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

Sub-areas

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

2.2 Practical training

2.3 Student assessment

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

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of 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 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

- *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 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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *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

The nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study. The university's distance learning quality assurance is evaluated by external and voluntary accreditations, such as the E-xcellence label by EADTU.

The University's learning management system facilitates online teaching, learning and administrative tasks. This is a Moodle installation that offers essential online teaching and learning services. The platform provides both synchronous (via Zoom) and asynchronous tools, ensuring students can interact with lecturers, peers, and materials. E-assessment tools, including quizzes with immediate feedback, are available on the platform for self-assessing understanding.

Interaction between teachers and students and among students takes place synchronously via teleconferences and asynchronously through the LMS's online forums. Each course offers at least 6 sessions of teleconferences of 2 hours each, ensuring sufficient live interaction between teachers and students. These teleconferences are recorded for those students unable to attend in real-time though most students typically do. Student collaboration is further encouraged through project-based learning activities in small teams. However, the design, procedure, and technical support for these activities were not presented.

Formative course assessment typically includes two midterm assignments that contribute 20% each to the final grade, providing personalized feedback during the course. The summative assessment comprises a mandatory online final exam worth 50% of the final grade. Course assessment also involves participative activities, such as discussion forums, wikis, and blogs, which count for the remaining 10%. However there are no criteria for the apportionment. Optional non-grade formative self-assessment tasks with indicative answers are included weekly to help students self-assess their understanding and competences. Although complex e-assessment forms exist for evaluating key competencies, such as critical thinking, these specific assessment procedures were not demonstrated during the meetings.

Strengths

The EEC believes that continually evaluating the quality assurance of distance learning by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations is a good practice.

The EEC considers the University's distance learning model to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time online students who have professional and family duties and need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion. The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a good student-teacher ratio (1/30) and student feedback is very positive.

The provision of personalised feedback in the submitted assignments and during the teleconference sessions are considered best practices. In addition, the EEC recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities, project-based, and discussions organised in online teams. Finally, the very detailed weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week, is also considered a best practice.

The EEC urges the university to keep up these strong elements of their distance learning model while reinforcing them when possible.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

From the documentation provided and the information gathered from the meetings, it was not clear if formative assessment provides feedback based on rubrics and whether these rubrics are shared with students. If that is the case, then the above are recommended.

In addition, the use of peer-assessment as well as gamification strategies are encouraged to increase the student levels of motivation and engagement with the e-assessment process.

Finally, more sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents could be considered to support immediate and automatic feedback to students and self-evaluate their advances.

While the EEC emphasises the benefits of any form of online collaboration among students, teleconferences and other forms of online synchronous collaboration may be perceived as problematic, if the program is open internationally and attended by students across remote time zones. It was not clear how the university would support this type of collaboration from the coordination perspective.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partly Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

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.*
- *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:

- *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

The university has a Distance Learning governance structure, including a Distance Learning Unit and related bodies, that provides training and support to instructors and students involved in such mode of delivery. This support includes seminars, mentoring, and technical assistance for faculty members from various university schools. Faculty members can participate in training programs to enhance their skills in conducting high-quality online teaching. However, these are in-house training programmes, not certified as professional development, specifically pertaining to distance learning. It was found, as reflected during the discussion with the faculty, that the effort required to support the distance learning commitments, especially when a new course or a module needs to be designed from scratch, may, in some cases, exceed the normal human capacity.

The EEC has not seen any policy on the use of AI tools in the submitted work by students.

Strengths

The commitment of the faculty in the design of distance learning courses and the support in their delivery

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Certain training courses on distance learning programmes should be offered to all faculty and that should form an element in their promotion track.

Based on the discussion with the faculty, we would recommend that expansion of the legal toolbox of the University in relation to legal journals and periodicals. This would also strengthen the delivery of the various modules.

The University is encouraged to follow good practices in the appointment of instructors in the programme based on the Agenda 2030 SDG's, especially Goal 5.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partly 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

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

Strengths

A strength was noted around the low drop-out rate (~5%).

The admission process by the body mandated with that task, seems to be very solid and ensures the acceptance in the programme of well-equipped students, as reflected also in the low drop-out ratio.

In addition, student feedback is mandatory at the end of the course.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

While the University gathers all the above mentioned data, effective use of it, in terms of specific measures for improvement being adopted by the University, should be ensured.



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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partly 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

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *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 learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*
- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

Findings

The University's Distance Learning Unit is tasked with providing pedagogical support for the creation and evaluation of online courses. This unit ensures study materials, interactive activities, and

assessments align with international standards. In particular, the unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities, and both formative and summative assessments, including a good variety of learning materials (e-books, videos, papers, etc.), beneficial for distance learning, even though they were now detailed during the meetings. Finally, the unit is currently exploring the integration of cutting-edge technologies, such as AI, into their online programs. The EEC acknowledges the Distance Learning Unit's efforts to continuously improve the distance teaching and learning experience.

The proposed courses have a complete syllabus and highly detailed weekly student-centred study guides, which include relevant information: objectives, learning outcomes, methodology, materials to use, activities to perform (including self-evaluation activities with indicative answers), and complementary bibliographic references and recommended study time for the proposed activities. Moreover, the study guides are well-presented and comprehensive, motivating students in the learning process. The EEC considers this a best practice.

Strengths

The Distance Learning Unit outlines a comprehensive set of guidelines, underpinned by the University's procedures and policies, which includes guidelines for developing and delivering distance learning, thus establishing the main characteristics a distance learning course should have.

The Distance Learning Unit, as a body, is considered a best practice due to its structured approach, resources, and services devoted to enhanced distance learning. The EEC believes it can be a powerful support in guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of teaching, while providing a solid foundation for faculty members seeking to enhance their distance learning expertise.

The existence of a faculty handbook can serve as a valuable reference to ensure quality and consistency across all distance learning courses.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The Handbook should make clear distinction in the activities included in an ECTS pertaining to the conventional as opposed to the distance learning LLM, because they encompass different activities.

The contents that would comprise the mentioned faculty handbook are scattered across the university's web page and the study guides, among other documents. The University is urged to consolidate these resources into a single, central handbook that would serve as an essential reference for the faculty and others interested in maintaining high-quality standards in distance learning.

The EEC recommends ensuring that recorded teleconferences and video lectures include the instructor in all videos to provide non-verbal communication and add subtitles for accessibility.

In addition, the use of interactive videos is suggested to enhance engagement among online students during teleconferences, featuring embedded quizzes, navigation options, and additional resources.



Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partly 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

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Sub-areas

- 6.1 Selection criteria and requirements**
- 6.2 Proposal and dissertation**
- 6.3 Supervision and committees**

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
 - *the stages of completion*
 - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
 - *the examinations*
 - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
 - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
 - *the chapters that are contained*
 - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
 - *the minimum word limit*
 - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
 - *regular meetings*

- reports per semester and feedback from supervisors
- support for writing research papers
- participation in conferences
- The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.

You may also consider the following questions:

- How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?
- Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?
- Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?

Findings

N/A

Strengths

N/A

Areas of improvement and recommendations

N/A

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Not applicable
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Not applicable
6.3	Supervision and committees	Not applicable

D. Conclusions and final remarks

Based on the findings and the recommendations as reflected in the performance per section we do not see the need to provide general remarks, subject to the conclusions below.

The EEC would like to take this opportunity and thank again the CYQAA for the invitation and the coordinator of CYQAA, Mr. Georgios Aletraris, for managing the evaluation of this programme both efficiently and effectively. Also, we, as EEC, would like to extend our thanks to all the colleagues at the University for the dedication, professionalism, and co-operation during the evaluation process.

The EEC report highlights the committee's key findings, the strengths of the programme and the University, and recommendations for improving the LLM (distance learning) offered by the University.

Overall, the EEC found the University's programme along the expected national standards. The nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study, including some strong elements that reinforce the University's distance learning model (i.e., the Distance Education Unit, ratio instructor/students and e-assessment procedures).

However, the EEC would like to ensure that forms of interaction and collaboration through online synchronous teleconferences and real-time collaboration among students are sustainable in the future years, if the programme expands, while recommending the constant adaptation of their distance learning model to support the evolution of the University.

The EEC believes that revisions based on the feedback provided would strengthen the programme. We advise the faculty of Frederick to take into consideration our recommendations and address all the suggestions.

Once more we remain at the disposal of CYQAA for any clarification required.



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
George Theocharidis	
Nikolaos Papapostolou	
Andromachi Georgosouli	
Santi Caballe	
Neta Christoforou	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 14 November 2023