

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].

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Date: 10/06/2022

External Evaluation Report

(E-learning programme of study)

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

In Greek:

ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ ΜΑΡΚΕΤΙΝΓΚ ΚΑΙ ΨΗΦΙΑΚΕΣ ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΕΣ

In English:

Marketing and Digital Communications

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme’s status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



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A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

First of all, the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) would like to thank the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) for inviting us to review and evaluate the proposed e-learning BBA in Marketing and Digital Communications of the European University of Cyprus.

The program under evaluation effectively builds on the success of the conventional one that has already been accredited and is currently running. As the core of the content and structure of the BBA program has been approved and operationalized successfully, the evaluation that took place on the 6th of June 2022 focused on the implementation of the e-learning mode of delivery and its potential effectiveness. More specifically, the evaluation agenda featured meetings with the senior management team, the program coordinator, the teaching faculty, current students on other e-learning program, and the administrative / supporting staff. We also had the opportunity to meet members of the Distant Learning Unit. The EEC report, its findings and recommendations were based on the above-mentioned meetings and the additional evidence provided by the University (requested during the evaluation).

The EEC would like to note that given the on-going pandemic restrictions, the evaluation took place online. As such the Committee did not visit the University in person to get a first-hand experience of the available infrastructure. Still considering the nature of the program, the EEC feels that the virtual presentation organized is sufficient for the purposes of this evaluation.

Following the template provided, the report provides a commentary on our findings, areas of strengths and areas that could be further improved. We provide recommendations that may help inform the thinking of the University/Department as to how to go about implementing the e-learning mode of delivery of the program in Marketing and Digital Communications.

If there are any questions about the report or any clarifications are necessary, the EEC remains at the disposal of the CYQAA.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Savvas Papagiannidis	Professor of Innovation and Enterprise	Newcastle University
Simos Chari	Senior Lecturer in Marketing Management & Strategy	University of Manchester
Santi Caballe	Professor of Learning Engineering.	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
Christos Kolympiris	Associate Professor in Innovation and Entrepreneurship	University of Warwick
Antrea Georgiou	Student Representative	University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
 - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
 - *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 BBA in Marketing and Digital Communications programme is a convention programme that has been accredited by the CYQAA. The EEC believes that borrowing its core content and structure is a good strategy as the conventional programme offers the platform/foundation on which the e-learning offering can be developed. The programme provides the necessary disciplinary knowledge and practical skills needed for professionals in the area of Marketing and Digital Communications. Considering the above, the EEC expects that the qualification awarded will meet the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and at the same time industry's expectations.

The European University Cyprus has a number of policies in place to ensure quality assurance. These apply to both the development and implementation of the program. Any new programmes or changes to existing programs have to go through the process. For e-learning programs this also involves obtaining feedback and responding to the guidelines provided by the Distant Learning Unit which makes recommendations and suggestions for consideration. Good practice recommendations can then be tailored to the program as per necessary. For already running programmes, policies cover areas such as curriculum development, assessment policies and plagiarism practices, student progression, and ECTS credits. There are mechanisms such as the student course feedback that can help shape future policies.

Important information about the similar programmes, their content and structure, admission criteria etc is publicly available on the University's website. Although the EEC expects that this programme will primarily attract interest from Cyprus and Greece, there is potentially to also attracted candidates from other countries, considering that this is an e-learning programme delivered in English. BBA in Marketing and Digital Communications is of particular interest to individuals who are already working and would like to develop their competencies in Marketing communications, digitalization, and social media. The flexible learning nature makes it possible to continue working while studying with potential positive spill-over effects during the period of study.

Strengths

There is already a program in place which can be used as a foundation to develop the new e-learning offering. Early evidence suggest that the conventional program is well-received in the market and student satisfaction is high. As such the EEC believes that this is a really good starting point for embarking on the e-learning one.

The institution and the teaching team have experience of delivering a similar programme that is currently progressively phased out.

The Distant Learning Unit can provide feedback and guidelines for continuous improvements on the e-learning programmes. The interdisciplinary nature of the Unit encourages sharing of ideas among different programmes coming from diverse faculties and disciplines.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The programme team can consider more systematically how to translate the conventional programme into a distinctive e-learning offering. At the moment, there is much good practice at the

individual course level. More can be done to bring things together at the program level. An learning framework such as that of Five Stage Model by Gilly Salmon (or other similar frameworks) may provide some inspiration on this front.

It will be useful to map assessment against courses and learning outcomes (similar to the course mapping against learning outcomes). This will help the programme team formulate a coherent assessment strategy that is suitable for an e-learning mode. As it stands, the assessments of conventional programme are identical with those of the proposed e-learning one. There is a need for tailoring to the e-learning mode of delivery.

This may offer an opportunity to internationalise the programme further encouraging students to share their consumer and working experiences.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

- 2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology
- 2.2 Practical training
- 2.3 Student assessment
- 2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

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

Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
 - *among students*
 - *between students and teaching staff*
 - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the e-learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the e-learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
 - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
 - *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
 - ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
 - *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
 - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
 - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
 - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
 - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?*
- *How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings

The proposed program is likely to attract individuals who are already working in the area of marketing or digital communications or would like to enter in this field. Such individuals can benefit from the knowledge and competencies that the program can provide them, putting them directly into practice.

The nature of the programme is compatible with e-learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study. The university's quality assurance is evaluated by external and voluntary accreditations, such as QS Stars and EFQM. The university also pursues accreditation on e-learning quality through a private institution. The university faces restrictions to become part of leading networks and associations for open and distance higher education, such as EADTU and EFQUEL.

The university's learning management system supports online teaching, learning, and administrative processes. The University uses the Blackboard Learn Ultra platform. The platform specifically provides synchronous (through Blackboard Collaborate) and asynchronous tools to support the interaction needs of students with the teaching staff, the other students and with the material uploaded. The platform also provides e-assessment procedures through quizzes with automatic feedback which allows to assess students' knowledge/understanding. The provision of more complex forms of e-assessment to assess competences and skills, such as critical thinking, is also provided; however, these specific assessment procedures were not presented to the EEC during the evaluation process.

Courses feature a significant dimension of independent learning. The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a weekly study guide that includes relevant information: summary, objectives, learning outcomes, keywords, basic and complementary bibliographic references, activities to perform, self-assessment exercises, and recommended study time. Materials are uploaded to Blackboard in advance for students to study in their own time and pace. The course instructions and induction meeting help to set the stage when it comes to the expectations that teaching staff have of students (e.g., with regards to how to go about studying the materials, the assessment etc). Each course has a minimum of 6 hours of teleconferences, which is considered an adequate number of hours of synchronous communication between instructors and students. During these teleconference sessions instructors cover key areas of interest and discuss with students any questions they may have. In addition, these teleconferences, are recorded for further re-use.

Collaboration among instructors and students (and among students) is conducted through the online forums of the course and other forums that can be created ad-hoc. In addition, collaboration among students is promoted by a number of activities (e.g., thread discussions) based on project-based learning; however, the design, procedure, and technical support for these activities were not shown to the EEC during the evaluation process.

Formative assessment of course units is based on submitted mid-term assignments and reports with provision of personalised feedback during the course. These mid-term assignments count to 40% of the final grade. Summative assessment is based on a mandatory final exam counting to 50% of the final grade. Assessment procedure during the course is completed with a number of online quiz-based and other interactive activities counting to 10%. Optional formative (self-assessment) activities are included in the weekly study guides in order to self-assess student knowledge and skills.

Strengths

The already running course and the delivery via number of different “channels” make it possible to both trial different approaches and gather feedback more quickly than usual. As such it possible to develop and optimise materials and pedagogies for each course at a relatively faster pace.

The EEC considers the university's e-learning model to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time online students who have professional duties and need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion. The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a good student-teacher ratio and

student feedback of e-learning programmes is positive. The provision of personalized feedback in the submitted assignments and during the teleconference sessions as well as the feedback based on rubrics and peer-review are considered best practices. In addition, the EEC recognizes the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities and discussions organized in online teams. Finally, the weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week, is also considered a best practice. The EEC urges the university to keep up these strong elements of their e-learning model while reinforcing them when possible.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. It may be useful to systematise the delivery of the courses (namely to have a list of high-level design criteria that all courses adhere to) so that there is a minimum of consistency among them.
2. It will be welcome to see the programme team consider offering more contact time to students beyond the minimum 6 teleconference sessions.
3. Onsite final exams may not be in line with the learning style of online students, and formative continuous assessment during the course could be reinforced instead.
4. More sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents are encouraged to support immediate and automatic feedback to students and self-evaluate their advances.
5. While the EEC emphasizes the benefits of any form of collaboration among students, the online synchronous collaboration among students was perceived as problematic. Especially, if in the next years the program is open internationally and many students across different time zones attend. It was not clear how the university would support this type of collaboration from the coordination perspective while recommending the constant adaptation of their e-learning model to support this situation by increasing the asynchronous interaction and collaboration.
6. Considering that students already work there is an opportunity for students to work in research projects related to their employment, where possible. In doing so they can only take part in research, but also act as ambassadors for the program.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Compliant

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

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

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

The e-learning BBA in Marketing and Digital Communications has been developed and will be taught by a team that has the necessary qualifications both when it comes to the disciplines involved but also the level required. The teaching team of the e-learning programme is to a great extent the same with the one that delivers the conventional programme BBA in Marketing and Digital Communications, which ensures the same high standard of delivery.

The EEC had the opportunity to meet many of colleagues who were involved in e-learning. Overall, they were satisfied with the results achieved and the opportunities that the technology affords teachers and learners. The EEC believes that there is a sufficiently good correspondence between staff's qualifications/expertise, the modules delivered and their research interests. The teaching team is sufficiently large to deliver the e-learning program effectively.

The university has a e-learning unit called "Team of Pedagogical Planning of Distance Education", which provides technical training and support. However, the effectiveness of these training programs in the form of professional development relevant to e-learning was not evident during the meeting with the teaching staff. Faculty members can participate in training programs to develop their skills to conduct quality online teaching.

Strengths

There is already a place to support teaching staff being involved in the delivery of e-learning programs.

The academic staff are active researchers and appear to be capable of integrating research and teaching in the regular courses. We assume this will also happen in the e-learning programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Considering that the BBA in Marketing and Digital Communications will be effectively offered via different “channels” it may worth considering the increasing workload implications this may have. Similarly, any changes to members of staff and in turn courses will affect more than just the e-learning program.

It would be welcome to see the European University of Cyprus considering a more formal training/development program for its staff that its potentially run by the Distant Learning Unit. The interdisciplinary nature of the Distant Learning Unit can provide a distinctive environment in which best practices and knowledge related to e-learning is shared. This can potentially benefit the community of the University more widely.

The EEC suggest incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN’s Agenda 2030 in the training programs of faculty staff. This will make it possible to redesign the teaching materials accordingly with the aim to empower students with emerging competencies and skills (e.g., climate action, gender equality, global and ethical engagement, etc.) to take action for a more sustainable world.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
 - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
 - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings

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

The EEC had the opportunity to discuss with five students their experience with the University. As the program under consideration is not running at the moment, the students we interviewed were enrolled in different e-learning programs at the University and they were at different stages of their studies with some being closer to graduation than others. We inquired about why they chose the program, specifics about content delivery, as well as an overall assessment of their experience with the University.

The students were open in expressing great satisfaction with their e-learning programs. The main reason to join the programs was flexibility that allowed them to combine work duties and study requirements. The students are exposed to both synchronous and asynchronous delivery methods. The former are typically 6 teleconference sessions per module per semester but if needed more sessions are added. These synchronous sessions are scheduled mainly in afternoon hours to accommodate student needs and work-related responsibilities. Asynchronous material include videos, PowerPoint presentations, case studies, notes etc.

Overall the University appears to be student – oriented with close interactions between students and faculty. In broad terms the students were also satisfied with their programs and with the services offered by the University such as access to study material, clarity on scholarly expectations and availability of merit-based scholarships. The students highlighted that the University is accommodating when it needs to be, that they are satisfied with the modules and with the infrastructure of the University. Overall, the student population appears satisfied with the University.

Admission criteria are on par with expectations and indeed the university appears to admit roughly half of the applicants of its e-learning programs.

The EEC observed that the University’s Blackboard platform provides a wide range of learning analytics tools for monitoring student progression and performance (e.g., collecting information from the student with lower grades, poor participation or with undelivered activities). However, it was not clear the extent the instructors use this information to support their students on a daily basis.

From the documentation provided and the information gathered, student feedback is mandatory at the course level and is also actively sought on an on-going basis throughout course delivery. However, the effectiveness of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement taken by the University was not observed.

Strengths

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

The University appears to be student oriented. For example, synchronous sessions are scheduled in afternoon times to assist students with job – related duties. There University awards a number of scholarships on the of basis academic performance.

The university has experience with e-learning programs and with a conventional program on the same topic. We expect such background to generate positive spillovers for the student experience of the focal program. The University collects student feedback on an ongoing basis to ensure the effectiveness of its programmes and delivery.

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.

Sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI were mentioned during the meetings to monitor and predict student performance and dropout in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures. This is strongly recommended in case of university's expansion plans through increasing the academic portfolio and/or the number of online students.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

- 5.1 Teaching and Learning resources**
- 5.2 Physical resources**
- 5.3 Human support resources**
- 5.4 Student support**

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
 - *Simulations in virtual environments*
 - *Problem solving scenarios*
 - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
 - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
 - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
 - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The video we were provided before the evaluation on the University's infrastructure together with the interviews we conducted lead us to conclude that the University offers adequate resources to both students and faculty including access to library material, IT infrastructure and administrative support.

Along the same lines, the library appears well equipped (as it participates in the Cyprus wide network of university libraries) and our overall impression is that all resources are in place and fully functional. In terms of human capital support, the University is performing well on that front as faculty appear to be provided what they need to fulfil their teaching duties and, in part and when applicable, their research endeavours.

The university's e-learning unit (Team of Pedagogical Planning of Distance Education) is responsible for providing pedagogical and technical support for designing, creating, implementing and evaluating online courses. The unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative and summative assessment.

The university also has a handbook with academic regulations underpinned by the university procedures and policies with guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning that establishes the main characteristics a distance learning course should have.

Strengths

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

Both faculty and students noted they were provided with the resources to perform what is expected of them. Indeed, the students appear quite happy with the services they receive.

The proposed course units have detailed weekly student-centred study guides, which include relevant information: objectives, learning outcomes, material to use, activities to perform, and recommended study time to carry out the proposed activities. These study guides are very well presented and in an engaging way, which motivates students in the learning process. The e-learning unit, is also considered a best practice, due to its potential structure, resources, infrastructures and services devoted to enhanced e-learning.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

While the online courses include a plethora of multi-format learning materials (e-books, articles, videos, audio, etc.), the EEC suggests that the recorded teleconferences and videos become a key feature of the delivery. They can be short, involving the teacher in all the videos, and adding subtitles for accessibility. In addition, the EEC suggest that some considerations should be taken into account to the provision of entire volumes (instead of clearly selected chapters and book pages) as basic materials in order to adapt them to online part-time students who need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC report has presented the findings, strengths and areas of improvement / recommendations for the e-learning BBA in Marketing and Digital Communications offered by the European University Cyprus. We hope that the report helps improve this program's success prospects.

Once more the EEC would like to take this opportunity and thank the CYQAA coordinator for managing the process both efficiently and effectively. If there are any clarifications necessary, the EEC will be more than happy to provide additional information in due course.

E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
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Simos Chari	
Santi Caballe	
Christos Kolympiris	
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Date: 10/06/2022