

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: Date.

# External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

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

#### **In Greek:**

Νομική (1,5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ LLM, Εξ Αποστάσεως)

#### **In English:**

Law (1,5 academic years, 90 ECTS, Master LLM, E - Learning)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English, Greek
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**  
**In Greek:** - Ευρωπαϊκό Δίκαιο Επιχειρήσεων – Ανθρώπινα Δικαιώματα και Κοινωνική Δικαιοσύνη  
**In English:** -European Business Law – Human Rights and Social Justice



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



## A. Introduction

*This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.*

The Committee (or the External Evaluation Committee/EEC) held meetings with the key stakeholders, including the Vice-Rector, the Dean of the Law School, the Head of the Department of Law, Faculty Staff, two graduates of the law school, members of the teaching and administrative staff, and others. The visit took place on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023 between 9am–5pm. During the meeting, the Committee attended and received copies of the presentations in addition to the pre-circulated material. There were several Q&A sessions which addressed questions raised by the members of the Committee and additional information. The Committee would like to comment favourably on the co-operation and openness of all the participants.

The Committee notes that the Agency evaluated the Law Programme LLM (Distance Learning & Conventional) in 2020 and 2017 which this Committee took into consideration when evaluating the Programme at this cycle.

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>Professor Ramses Wessel</b>	Vice-Dean and Professor of European Law	University of Groningen
<b>Professor Natalia Szablewska</b>	Professor in Law and Society	The Open University (UK)
<b>Professor Emmanuel Voyiakis</b>	Professor of Law	London School of Economics (UK)
<b>Professor Santi Caballe</b>	Professor of Learning Engineering	Open University of Catalonia
<b>George Kyriacou</b>	Lawyer	Cyprus Bar Association
<b>Markella Bitsiouni</b>	Student	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

*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 Programme has been designed to be delivered via Distance Learning (DL) and Conventional methods in English and Greek, but currently, it is delivered in Greek only due to the lack of demand for the English language track as well as via DL only.

The Programme has a clear purpose and objectives with a set of learning objectives. The Programme offers two specialisations in European Business Law and Human Rights and Social Justice and is open to law graduates and those from other relevant fields.

The University has in place several mechanisms to ensure the quality of the programmes. The programmes are accredited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), and the University has its own Academic and Quality Assurance Committee who oversees all the schools and programmes in order to ensure that they are of high quality. These structures appear appropriate to ensure the quality of the programmes, as they include several committees at the University level that aim to ensure excellence in both teaching and research.

As was explained to the Committee during the visit, the choice of concentrations is a response to the societal and professional needs in Cyprus. The Committee reached the same findings after discussing with alumni students, who confirmed that their degree from the University of Nicosia opened new professional opportunities to them.

The LLM programme is taught by a healthy mix of full- and part-time academic staff. Judges and professionals from different institutions are also involved in teaching through different methods; for instance, by giving invited lectures/seminars. During our discussions, the Law School noted that alumni engagement is one of the areas that the University needs to improve on to take full advantage of the opportunities that it might create for students and staff.

The Law School has also a strong research background. Academic staff participate in international academic events to keep up to date with all developments in their respective fields of research.

### Strengths

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

The EEC identified a number of strengths:

- structures and institutions that allow for monitoring, student participation, participation of academic and administrative staff to ensure the highest quality in research and teaching;
- the possibility for students to switch between the DL and conventional tracks to ensure that students have the flexibility to accommodate their changing personal/professional circumstances;
- academic staff ensure that they remain up to date by following specialised seminars in their respective research areas;
- the Programme corresponds to the societal and professional needs in Cyprus;

- small school that allows for regular interaction between staff and students;
- availability of staff to respond to students' queries, and good feedback turnaround;
- several research-related activities (e.g. externally funded projects) that allow also for the participation of students that are interested; the institution of the 'academic advisor' who identifies students at risk and devises appropriate support.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

The Committee acknowledges that the Programme offers students an opportunity to facilitate their employability skills by ensuring cooperation and involvement with external stakeholders and bodies, like the Cyprus Bar Association through regular lectures and seminars delivered by external speakers, as well as the university-administered work placements. The Committee believes that this aspect could be further strengthened by considering work placements of students across institutions in Cyprus (public, non-governmental or private) as part of the existing courses or through a new work-based placement course, as well as through the revival of the existing law clinic which is currently inactive.

The Committee encourages the Law School to consider providing clear information as to the type of course assessment communicated on the materials available to prospective students. This is to account for the majority of students working at the time of their studies and so might require more specific information to time-manage effectively ahead of the enrolment.

In the last evaluation of the Programme, the previous Committee recommended that the Institution should consider making the Final Thesis compulsory for the Programme in order to have graduates who are capable of conducting Independent Research. The Institution decided not to take up that recommendation. The current Committee encourages the Institution to consider making Legal Research Methodology (MLAW-509 DL) a compulsory course, offered at the beginning of the Programme, to ensure that all graduates have a basic understanding of research design and to help improve all students' research capabilities which are critical in most employment contexts these days.

The Committee notes that the Law School is currently undergoing a review of the individual courses' Learning Objectives (LOs) and would like to further encourage the work to ensure that the LOs are designed to be actionable and measurable, be set at the appropriate level for a Master's degree (could follow the Bloom's taxonomy) as well as align with and contribute to the achievement of the Programme LOs.

The Committee would encourage the Institution to reconsider the balance between compulsory and elective courses to provide a clearer focus to each concentration. The fact that student numbers are low in practice limits the possibility for further differentiation.



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

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

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

### Sub-areas

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

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

#### Standards

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

### 2.2 Practical training

#### Standards

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

## 2.3 Student assessment

### Standards

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

## 2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

### Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

### Findings

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

The Committee notes that only two graduates were able to join the meeting due to a slight delay in the agenda on the day thus direct findings from the students (graduates and current) are limited.

The design and content of the Programme support the individual and social development of students. The same holds for teaching in individual courses.

The design of the Programme is sufficiently flexible, as students are able to take a number of electives. At the same time, course choice is limited in practice if student numbers are low, and that is often the case given the size of the cohort and the specialised nature of the LLM programme.

The Committee was satisfied that the Programme encourages students to take an active role in their learning and to be autonomous thinkers. At the same time, the fact that the Thesis is not compulsory limits the degree to which some students can satisfy the relevant learning outcomes (see below Recommendations section).

The teaching processes are modern and effective, and the distribution of ECTS credits (10 ECTS per taught course; 30 ECTS for the Thesis) seem reasonable.

Standard processes for collating feedback, appeals and complaints seem to work well. Student feedback is taken seriously and acted upon promptly.

The application materials and our discussions during the visit showed that elements of theory and practice are well integrated into the Programme, both across courses and within them.

Overall, methods of assessment appear to be to be fair and consistent. The processes are known in advance and fit the learning outcomes of the Programme and individual courses. However, assessments are not anonymised.

Students have several opportunities to participate in research. First, through the production of an original piece of research for the purpose of the Thesis. Here the programme's process of Thesis supervision struck us as very effective and fair. Second, in the context of assignments for individual courses. The EEC was less sure about the effectiveness of that form of research engagement, which is by nature limited in extent.

The nature of the Programme is compatible with DL delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular Programme of study. The university's DL quality assurance is evaluated by external and voluntary accreditations, such as EADTU, EFQUEL/UNIQUE, and QS Stars.

The university employs a Moodle installation to support online teaching, learning, and administrative processes. The platform is equipped with synchronous and asynchronous tools that facilitate effective communication between students and lecturers, as well as among students themselves. E-assessment procedures are also available, ranging from quizzes with automatic feedback to more complex assessments that evaluate critical thinking and teamwork. However, collaborative activities, such as project-based learning in small teams, were not part of the curricula of this Programme, so the EEC is unsure whether the university is prepared to support this type of online collaboration.

Students benefit from a minimum of 9 hours of synchronous communication with their lecturers and report high levels of satisfaction with these sessions. Although these live sessions are not mandatory, it was reported that they typically attract around 66% attendance. To accommodate students who are unable to attend, the sessions are recorded, a practice highly valued by the students. The sessions are primarily scheduled between 6pm and 9pm, aiming to facilitate maximum participation among students in particular those who are in employment.

Collaboration among teachers and students (and among students) is conducted through the online forums of the courses and other forums that can be created ad hoc to address the particularities of each course. In addition, collaboration among students appears to be promoted by collaborative activities, though the

Committee was not provided with further details on the design, procedure and technical support for these activities.

Assessment in the courses comprises an exam and one or two written assignments. Those assignments are assessed with personalised feedback, contributing to 20-30% of the final grade. The assessment is primarily based on a compulsory online final exam, which accounts for 60% of the final grade. The assessment procedure during the course is completed with a number of weekly online quiz-based assignments and formative exercises included in the study guides in order to self-evaluate student knowledge and skills of the course. These weekly activities along with the participation in in-class discussions count for a minimum of 10% of the final grade. Their point is to ensure continuous involvement of students in the course. Lecturers thus have the flexibility to set appropriate assessment methods for 40% of the final grade, about which the students are duly informed at the start of the course through an assessment guide and during the teleconferences.

Academic integrity is upheld through the implementation of Proctorio for final exams and Turnitin for written assignments. However, the growing advancement of AI, particularly ChatGPT, is acknowledged as a concern, particularly in relation to written assignments. The Programme staff are fully aware of this challenge and are actively working on developing strategies to address and respond to it.

### Strengths

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

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 DL model to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time students with professional and/or family duties, who need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion. The provision of personalised feedback in the submitted assignments and during the teleconference sessions, as well as the feedback based on rubrics (even if not demonstrated during the meeting), are considered best practices. In addition, the Committee recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities and in-class discussions. Finally, the weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week are also considered a best practice. The EEC urges the university to keep up these strong elements of their DL model while reinforcing them when possible.

The Committee also notes the following strengths:

Quick turnaround of feedback and marks

Clear guidance on the Thesis process

Thesis examination process strikes the right balance between students' areas of interest and staff expertise, and the examination process is very robust



### 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.*

Based on the information provided and discussed during the meeting, the EEC suggests that the university considers implementing gamification strategies to increase student motivation and engagement with the e-assessment process. Additionally, the Committee recommends exploring more sophisticated forms of feedback using intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents to provide immediate and automatic feedback to students and enable them to self-evaluate their progress.

Although the EEC acknowledges the advantages of interaction and collaboration, it recognises that online synchronous teleconferences can present challenges if the program expands globally, accommodating students from different time zones. In addition, students expressed certain difficulties attending these sessions due to personal commitments, resulting in a missed opportunity to engage with this valuable interactive learning resource. The recorded version of these sessions, due to the lack of interaction with the instructor and students, is not a sufficient substitute. Consequently, the EEC recommends that the university address these challenges by prioritising increased asynchronous online interaction. This approach would better accommodate the diverse needs of students, providing flexibility and ensuring equitable access to the learning experience. The EEC encourages the university to continue evaluating and adapting their DL model to ensure the highest level of quality and effectiveness.

The Committee suggests that an approach to address the ChatGPT and similar technologies is considered at the university level for a unified approach across the different schools and departments.

The Committee strongly recommends that the university anonymised student assessments. When asked about it during the visit the Institution did not offer a credible explanation for its current practice.

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

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

### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

#### Sub-areas

#### **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**

#### **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**

#### **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

### **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**

#### Standards

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

### **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**

#### Standards

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

### **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

#### Standards

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

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

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

### Findings

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

The Committee had the opportunity to discuss extensively the recruitment, development and promotion process with members of faculty. These discussions enabled the Committee to ensure the accuracy of the information submitted in the Institution's application. In addition, the Committee scrutinised the CVs of the academic staff involved in the delivery of the Programme, and discussions with staff produced very useful information about different experiences in relation to student engagement and the work balance between teaching and research.

The EEC recognises and praises the DL program for its high levels of synchronicity and interaction between students and teachers, both synchronous and asynchronous. The teaching and coordinating staff are commended for their dedication and extra effort in making this possible. Additionally, the Programme's strong support structure is impressive, as it enables the teaching staff to handle technical challenges and provides hands-on guidance to students.

The university has a DL unit called "e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit" (ePSU) dedicated to providing technical training and support to faculty members to enhance their skills in delivering effective online teaching. The training programmes offered by ePSU are well-structured and comprehensive, allowing faculty members to gain certification in professional development relevant to distance learning.

### Strengths

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

The teaching staff receives comprehensive training, guidance, and ongoing support to familiarize themselves with the unique aspects of e-learning. This approach not only facilitates their understanding but also promotes innovation in the utilisation of emerging technologies. The EEC recognises the university's commitment to delivering high-quality online education through its dedicated ePSU unit and investment in faculty development. These initiatives ensure that faculty members are well-prepared with the essential tools and knowledge to effectively support student success in the online learning environment.

The Committee notes also the following strengths:

Academic staff have strong CVs, and all are PhD holders.

Members of staff engage in high-quality research.

The staff-student ratio is quite low.

Staff enjoy adequate support from the Institution's senior management.

Students are exposed to research-led teaching by being taught by research-active experts in their respective fields.

### 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 suggests taking into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN Agenda 2030 in the training programmes for the teaching staff in order to redesign the teaching materials accordingly with the aim to empower students with emerging competencies and skills (e.g., climate change, gender equality, global and ethical engagement, etc.) to take action for a more sustainable world.

The Committee notes that at the top level (Associate and Full Professor levels) there is gender balance but, overall, out of the 16 teaching staff members, only three are women. This gender imbalance highlights the underrepresentation of women within the staff. The Institution recognises the challenge and attributes it to a limited number of female applicants for positions.

The EEC believes that the current policy of rewarding publication of research in Scopus-ranked journals is not fair to the circumstances of legal research as many leading peer-reviewed law journals are not Scopus ranked.



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 Committee had the opportunity to scrutinise the material submitted by the Institution and cross-check it with the information that emerged from discussions with faculty and students. In addition, the Committee examined issues related to student progression, certification and recognition. Overall, the Committee can confirm that the Institution has sufficient, publicly available and accessible regulations on all aspects of the Programme.

The student counselling support is highly commendable. This was evident through conversations with administrative staff as well as the comprehensive documentation provided to the EEC. This support plays a crucial role, starting from the application stage and acting as a central point for information, guidance, support, and communication between the student, the department, and other services such as disability support and counselling. This well-structured support system is invaluable for DL students and operates effectively.

The university's Moodle platform provides a wide range of learning analytics tools for monitoring student progression and performance based on collecting information from the student with lower grades, poor participation or with undelivered activities. This information is useful to identify students at risk so that the lecturers can intervene with corrective measures. However, the positive impact in terms of improvement of student success from the specific corrective measures was not evidenced during the meeting.

The EEC would like to highlight that students benefit from a good student-teacher ratio (maximum of 1:30) and student feedback is very positive.

Student feedback is actively sought at the end of course through online anonymous surveys and on an ongoing basis throughout course delivery. The EEC would like to note the response rate is quite high for this type of survey (about 50%), which makes the information collected fairly reliable. However, the effectiveness

of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement and action plans taken by the university, was not evidenced during the meeting.

The EEC was informed that it is feasible to complete the Programme within twelve months. This is achieved by successfully completing all courses in the first and second semesters, followed by a Thesis during the summer, although the university indicated that this is a new approach and no students have yet pursued this timeline.

### Strengths

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

Dropout rates are quite low (up to 7%). According to the interviews held during the site visit with teaching staff and students, students' circumstances are taken into account to facilitate their follow-up of the study program. Students receive technical and teaching support to enable them to reconcile their studies with their personal and work life.

The use of consistent standards for evaluating students by all faculty members is commendable, reflecting a positive approach. The teaching staff actively promote interaction among students, fostering a collaborative and engaging learning environment. Equally important is the encouragement for students to self-assess their progress and provide feedback on the teaching through surveys. These practices prioritise student involvement, self-reflection, and continuous improvement in the learning experience.

The admissions criteria are flexible enough to accommodate the different types of students recruited by this programme.

The regulations governing the organisational structure of the programme are well-aligned with established international practice, and appropriate for the needs of the local professional context.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

The Committee supports the decision to open the Programme to students without a law background, however, to ensure that students from other fields can participate equally and to the full extent in the programme, the Law School should consider offering these students a general introduction to law and legal methods, which could be scheduled early in the first semester.

More sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI and specifically Machine Learning are encouraged to be used to monitor and predict student performance and dropout in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures. This is strongly recommended in the case of university's expansion plans through increasing the academic portfolio and 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 Institution has sufficient equipment for the delivery of DL programmes, a library with a readily accessible digitised physical catalogue and access to other online resources. The Institution's Moodle platform requires modernisation, but the Committee was assured that it will be updated to the latest version over the summer of 2023. Overall, the Committee found that the available teaching resources are fit for purpose.

Overall, the University has appropriate mechanisms for overseeing the development, implementation and monitoring of student-related policies.

The proposed courses have a comprehensive syllabus and a weekly study guide that includes important information such as learning objectives, keywords, relevant bibliography, activities, and synopses. However, the EEC notes that some required readings consist of entire volumes and that assessments are not always clearly detailed, sometimes referring students to the LMS or a separate assessment guide instead. The EEC believes there is room for improvement here.

The DL unit (ePSU) is responsible for providing pedagogical support to faculty members in designing, creating, implementing, and evaluating online courses. The Unit ensures that study materials, interactive activities, and formative and summative assessments meet international standards. To guarantee quality and consistency across the university's distance learning courses, the unit also provides a comprehensive Faculty Handbook with clear and detailed guidelines for course development and delivery. Moreover, the ePSU offers a variety of training programmes, some of which are officially certified, to faculty members for their professional development in DL.

### Strengths

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

The ePSU is considered a best practice, due to its potential structure, resources, infrastructures and services devoted to enhanced DL. The EEC believes that it can be powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the provided teaching while providing a good background to faculty members to deliver DL.

### 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.*

Based on the samples of the study guide provided in English, the EEC recommends that the Institution provide more information to effectively guide online students through the course, such as a detailed learning and assessment methodology, and recommended study time, which is very convenient for online students

with limited time to plan their study. The EEC would like to draw attention on this point in order to update the study guides following these recommendations.

In addition, the EEC recommends providing a clear indication of the relevant parts of the entire volumes in the study guides to be studied in order to make them more manageable for part-time students. The inclusion of a detailed learning methodology, learning outcomes, and recommended study time in the study guide can also be helpful in guiding online students through the course.

Finally, the EEC recommends that the university should encourage and incentivise teaching staff to develop and incorporate innovative teaching practices that promote interaction, engagement, collaboration and active learning in their distance learning courses. To this end, the EEC suggests that the ePSU should provide clear guidelines and procedures for the implementation and evaluation of teaching innovations. This will ensure that any teaching innovation is effectively incorporated into the distance learning process and evaluated for its effectiveness.

The Committee recommends that the University develops short guidance to students on online engagement (netiquette). Such guidance could be incorporated into the existing learning resources.

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

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

## D. Conclusions and final remarks

*Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.*

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The Committee is satisfied that the University sets and follows high standards in providing top-level education to their students. It is indeed one of the best institutions in Cyprus; however they seem to be eager to keep improving and developing new programmes according to the needs of society and students. Overall, the Committee finds that the Programme is compliant with the Agency's standards.

At the same time, the Committee would like to make the following recommendations:

- The Committee encourages the Law School to consider providing clear information as to the type of course assessment communicated on the materials available to prospective students.
- The Committee encourages the Institution to consider making Legal Research Methodology (MLAW-509 DL) a compulsory course, offered at the beginning of the Programme, to ensure that all graduates have a basic understanding of research design and to help improve all students' research capabilities which are critical in most employment contexts these days.
- The Committee would encourage the Institution to reconsider the balance between compulsory and elective courses to provide a clearer focus to each concentration.
- The Committee strongly recommends that the university anonymise student assessments.
- The Committee notes that at the top level (Associate and Full Professor) there is gender balance but, overall, out of the 16 teaching staff members, only three are women. It therefore recommends that the Institution develop a clear plan for redressing this imbalance.
- The EEC believes that the current policy of rewarding publication of research in Scopus-ranked journals is not fair to the circumstances of legal research as many leading peer-reviewed law journals are not Scopus ranked.
- The Law School should consider offering students from non-law backgrounds a general introduction to law and legal methods, which could be scheduled early in the first semester.
- The EEC recommends that the Institution provide more information to effectively guide online students through the course, such as a detailed learning and assessment methodology, and recommended study time, which is very convenient for online students with limited time to plan their study.



## E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. R A Wessel	
Prof. N Szablewska	
Prof. E Voyiakis	
Prof. S Caballe	
Mr G Kyriacou	
Ms M Bitsiouni	

**Date:** 20/05/2023